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## The Celebrity Factor: An Evaluation of the Effect Celebrity Provenance at Auction

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The Celebrity Factor: An Evaluation of the Effect Celebrity Provenance at Auction

By

Danielle Gray

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with the requirements for the  
Master's Degree in Art Business  
Sotheby's Institute of Art

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# The Celebrity Factor: An Evaluation of the Effect Celebrity Ownership at Auction

By: Danielle Gray

## **Abstract**

The effect of celebrity provenance on value of fine art and design is a recent phenomenon that can be explained by unpacking the changing profile of collectors, the rise of the digital age and contemporary fascination with celebrity. Understanding these changes will shed light on different factors that contribute to the premium often associated with celebrity sales. Although research has been done before on this topic before, the research neglects to look at the auction house as a factor in understanding the effects of celebrity provenance. By evaluating the celebrity, and the auction houses, relationship to the works of art and design will help determine what specific qualities and factors contribute to the objects perceived value. Using two celebrity auctions as cases, I will offer explanations on why there are disproportionate effects on objects at single-seller celebrity auctions.

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## Introduction:

“Shouldn’t the name of the artist be enough to drive the value and sale of a particular piece or collection?”<sup>1</sup> Recent auctions suggest otherwise. The increased presence of single seller celebrity sales in the 21<sup>st</sup> century illustrate a shift in collecting behaviors, where provenance serves as a large determinate of value. The increased presence of provenance has made it impossible to flip through auction catalogues without seeing images of the previous owners alongside their works.<sup>2</sup> The recent phenomena suggests that there is an association between well-known personalities and perceived value. By establishing a relationship between a celebrity and their objects, auctions have capitalized on the power of the celebrity name.

Technically speaking, all objects at auction contain a provenance, which is simply the history of ownership or the objects origin.<sup>3</sup> The provenance provides a record of all owners since the objects creation and has an impact on the value. However, it is not the only provenance that affects art value—other determinants include condition, authenticity, exposure and quality. Together, these five factors create an explanation for an objects value.<sup>4</sup> Generally, the factors produce similar prices across the board for the artist, meaning that it is possible to create estimates by using comparables. However, when the pattern is broken, and an object experiences an extreme price inflation or deflation, it illustrates that one of the factors is more significant. According to Michael

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Van der Vorst, “The David Bowie Phenomenon: Why Art Collected By Celebrities Creates Such A Draw,” HuffPost UK, December 1, 2016, accessed June 9, 2019, [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/patrick-van-der-vorst/the-david-bowie-phenomeno\\_b\\_13283184.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/patrick-van-der-vorst/the-david-bowie-phenomeno_b_13283184.html).

<sup>2</sup> Susan Moore, “Framing Narratives: Provenance | from Famous Owners to Historical Significance, the Stories Behind Works of Art are Becoming Increasingly Important, by Susan Moore Europe Region],” *Financial Times*, Mar 09, 2019, accessed June 2019, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.sothebysinstitute.com/docview/2205113800?accountid=13958>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Findlay, *The Value of Art Money, Power, Beauty*, Munich: Prestel, 2014, 39

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 39

Findlay, “an appealing provenance may actually increase the value of a work,” however, he goes on to say that it generally only works for objects of “modest or intermediate quality” rather than “a great work, which will achieve its value on its own merits.”<sup>5</sup> Findlay demonstrates a potential limit in the provenance factor, but it does not account for why it can effect some, but not all, objects in a private sale.

The general consensus that celebrity association increases value of objects at auction is reinforced by auctions consistently outperforming their presale estimates. However, research neglects to look directly at the objects compared to their typical market and evaluate if there are any accentuating factors that might cause the piece to increase in value, such as rarity. In order to determine how and why celebrity provenance creates a premium at auction, it is important to look at the overall performance of the sale. Only then is it possible to evaluate specific factors and characteristics that fine art and design must possess to benefit from celebrity provenance. Before it is possible to evaluate the effects of celebrity provenance, it is important to first understand how and why provenance has situated itself as a forefront factor for determining value. It is also imperative to define ‘celebrity’ and unpack the fascination that accompanies them. By contextualizing celebrity provenance, only then is it possible to determine celebrity provenances’ effects at auction. In this study, two celebrity sales from the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be evaluated; looking at objects both affected and unaffected by celebrity provenance.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 40



## Chapter 1: History of Auctions

From Ancient Rome, to the international and globally connected 21<sup>st</sup> century, auctions have served the same goal—to generate revenue and facilitate commerce. Although the goal remains the same, auctions continued to develop due cultural and political shifts, resulting in the industry we experience today. In recent years, the number of private collection sales have grown, resulting in an increase of the presence of provenance. These sales, often associated with well-known celebrities or influential, and globally recognized, collectors, result in auction totals that may double or triple the pre-sale high estimate.<sup>6</sup> The importance of celebrity provenance is rooted in desirability, a concept utilized throughout history. Understanding its' different forms will help explain contemporary fascination with celebrity provenance and its importance.

### *Creating Demand*

For an auction to occur, there are a few necessary elements that must be present: an auctioneer, buyers and objects for sale. Without these three components auctions would cease to exist. However, their presence does not guarantee the auctions success. To be successful, auctions create demand, which rooted in the concept of desire. Desire is constructed through a combination of physical and psychological factors, which when spun together by an auctioneer, create an atmosphere conducive for successful sales.

The London coffee houses in the 17<sup>th</sup> century first fulfilled this duty.<sup>7</sup> The comfortable and inviting environment welcomed all classes of people to attend and

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the paper, I will refer to celebrity as an umbrella term for both celebrities and prominent collectors.

<sup>7</sup> Paris also had an art market and auction industry, but their auctions were state-run, monopolized by a law enacted in 1556 which gave the *huissiers-priseurs* exclusive rights to appraise, auction estates and properties 'taken in execution.' Huda, Shireen. "The International Context for Art Auctions." In *Pedigree and Panache: A History of the Art Auction in Australia*, 7-18. ANU Press, 2008. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hdmd.7](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt24hdmd.7).

participate.<sup>8</sup> The auctions positioned themselves as social gatherings and utilized newspapers and advertisements to disseminate information about the sales. To create demand, auctioneers used theatrics to elevate the energy levels to induce a competitive atmosphere, which resulted in increasing sales and revenue.<sup>9</sup>

An English auctioneer, Edward Millington, saw an opportunity to exploit the competition by transitioning auctions from public gatherings to ticketed events.<sup>10</sup> The exclusivity enhanced the association between auctions and high social status. As a result, popularity increased, leading the movement out of coffee houses to more up-scale and larger venues to accommodate the new demographic of participants.<sup>11</sup> With more wealth present at auctions, auctioneers hired specialists to authenticate objects and use their perceived authority to increase buyers' confidence.<sup>12</sup> Although more often than not, auctioneers sometimes paid the specialists to promote the work in order to generate sales.<sup>13</sup> Despite falsifying the buyers' confidence, the auctioneers discovered a psychological tactic that can be used to increase value and also they unknowingly set the precedent for the future need of provenance as a way to verify authenticity.

English auctions continued to thrive in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, permitting the establishment of permanent auction houses. In 1744, Samuel Baker founded Sotheby's as a book and manuscript seller, and in 1766 James Christie founded Christie's auction house,<sup>14</sup> which specialized in fine art and sculpture. Following the outbreak of the French

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<sup>8</sup> Shireen Huda, "The International Context for Art Auctions," 9

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 9

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>11</sup> Auctions were moved from the Coffee Houses to locations such as the Convent Gardens and Royal Exchange. Jeremy R Howard, "Art Market," Encyclopedia Britannica, November 10, 2017, Accessed July 24, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/art-market>

<sup>12</sup> Shireen Huda, "The International Context for Art Auctions," 11

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 11

<sup>14</sup> Christie's, "About Us." Christie's, Accessed October 2019, <https://www.christies.com/about-us/welcome-to-christies>

revolution and its resulting political instability, many wealthy French estates were forced liquidate their assets and send the material to London for auction.<sup>15</sup> The massive amount of materials flowing throughout the London auction industry forced the auction houses to take control and organize the chaos. As a result, auction houses flourished, establishing themselves as mainstays in the art market.

Despite the popularity of auctions, evident through the establishment of auction houses, a study done of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century art market illustrates a different picture. According to Jeremy Cooper in *The Economics of Taste*, he discovered that only a small percentage of art sales occurred at auction.<sup>16</sup> Private sales directly between artists and collectors resulted in prices greater than £1,000.<sup>17</sup> The analysis illustrated a systemic issue on how to enhance demand at auction in order to compete with the popularity of private sales. However, before they solved the issue, the 19<sup>th</sup> century art dealer saw a profitable opportunity to serve as a middleman between the collectors and artists.<sup>18</sup> To facilitate these relationships, art dealers positioned themselves as 'tastemakers,' serving as a form of endorsement and authority on art.<sup>19</sup>

Paul Durand Ruel, one of the most prolific art dealers and also an expert for the Hôtel Drouot.<sup>20</sup> As an expert, Durand Ruel commanded the necessary authority to compel wealthy collectors to purchase high valued art.<sup>21</sup> He realized the value of outside voices to confirm the demand and desire for art. The realization led him to develop the dealer-critic system, which provided a secondary affirmation on the quality of works by

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<sup>15</sup> Jeremy R Howard, "Art Market"

<sup>16</sup> Shireen Huda, "The International Context for Art Auctions," 11

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 11

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 12

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 12

<sup>20</sup> Hôtel Drouot is the Parisian state-run auction house.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-De-Siecle Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, 52

the critics' reviews of artists and exhibitions.<sup>22</sup> The introduction of the system enhanced curiosity throughout the art market, pioneering the development of scholarly articles to validate aesthetic importance and generate interest.

The development of museums, specifically in New York, began with the expansion of the art market in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to accommodate the rising wealthy class in New York due to the economic growth from the industrial revolution. One of the most important players in the American art market was Samuel P. Avery of Avery's Art Room, who jumpstarted the prestige associated with collection building through his notable clients such as William Henry Vanderbilt and Edwin Denison Morgan.<sup>23</sup> After Avery's expansion to NYC, the American Art Association (AAA)<sup>24</sup> developed in its footsteps in 1883. The AAA revolutionized the auction industry by positioning themselves proprietors of art for the elite. To attract elite clientele, Kirby and Sutton<sup>25</sup> created atmospheres that promoted excellency and extravagance. Their showroom doors "emulated the décor of elite mansions,"<sup>26</sup> as an effort to discourage the non-elite from entering; they even ranked and sorted the audience at auctions.<sup>27</sup> These tactics consolidated the identity of

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<sup>22</sup>Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-De-Siecle Europe*, 52

<sup>23</sup> "Samuel Putnam Avery Papers," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accessed November 2, 2019, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/watson-digital-collections/manuscript-collections/samuel-putnam-avery-papers>

<sup>24</sup> The American Art Association was started by James F. Sutton, R. Austin Robertson and Thomas E. Kirby in 1883 to promote the sale of American Art. However, due to the slow start, the AAA transitioned to sell European Art as well in 1885, which led to the prominence of the AAA. with a slow start, the AAA transitioned to sell European art as well as American Art in 1885. but the AAA did not take off until the 1885. American Art Association Records, Circa 1853-1929, bulk 1885-1992," Archives of American Art, Accessed November 2, 2019, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/american-art-association-records-6973>

<sup>25</sup> Robertson helped found the AAA but did not contribute to any of their future developments, therefore will not be mentioned going further.

<sup>26</sup> John Otto, "How New York Stole the Luxury Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America," *Winterthur Portfolio* 42, no. 2/3 (2008): 133-58, doi: 10.1086/589594, 142.

<sup>27</sup> They reserved the first three rows for the artists, dealers and the close circle of the seller in the auction halls, specifically at Chickering Hall. John Otto, "How New York

the elite, creating a synonymous relationship between art collecting and high social status.

### *The 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Rise of Provenance*

The 20<sup>th</sup> experienced a shift with the widespread use of provenance and its contributions to establishing legacy and authenticating works of art. Although provenance use is seen throughout history, it was not a common marketing technique. One of the first examples of its use comes from a Roman tale, recorded by Vasari in the 1600's. He described an instance when a buyer's interest affected an object's desirability; The buyers' high monetary bid determined the aesthetic value of the painting at auction.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Sotheby's sale of Napoleon Bonaparte's St. Helena's book collection in 1823 demonstrated the importance of notable provenance, specifically with someone who is perceived as having 'good taste'.<sup>29</sup>

Provenance not only appeared for authenticity purposes, but as a signal for reputation. A French critic, Henri Rochefort, said that the "price of pictures all depends upon the nail on which they hang," demonstrating the changing dynamics in the way's art was priced. The article, from the *Evening Post*, continues to say that,

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Stole the Luxury Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America," 142.

<sup>28</sup> Giorgio Vasari wrote in the *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, that King Attalus, King of Pergamum, bid 600 sesterces for Bacchus by Aristedes. The roman's refused to acknowledge the sale because they believed that the painting must be important due to the high price bid. Shireen Huda, "The International Context for Art Auctions," 7.

<sup>29</sup> The final lot in the auction, his gold walking stick fetched 38 pounds and 17 shillings, roughly £2,200 pounds today. The sale demonstrates the early effects of celebrity provenance on objects at auction, despite his controversial reputation. Since Napoleon was revered as having good taste because the arts flourished under his rule by raising the importance of artisans with many royal commissions and their prominent placement within all aspects of the royal court—from the dining settings, court dress and paintings that adorned the many walls throughout the palaces, Napoleon was an early patron for the arts. James David Draper, *The Arts Under Napoleon*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978.

“if the nail is driven through the plush of a Fifth Avenue dealer the dependent picture is appraised in five or six figures; if the nail is driven through the plaster of some humble establishment on a side street, the same picture is dear at three or four figures; if the nail belongs to a little dealer or an obscure auctioneer, the picture is worth whatever you will offer for it.”<sup>30</sup>

Although the quote focuses on the dealer rather than the collector, it demonstrates the shift in buyers’ attention on surrounding factors to determine value. However, it was necessary due to the lack of standard market information, which included both price and sale records. Therefore, in order to create value, the art market focused its attention on creating desirability by looking collectors and their interest, ultimately turning their interests into the pinnacle of ‘good taste’ and therefore changed what ‘high class’ collecting looked like.

Collectors soon transitioned from the hallmark of ‘good taste’ to the ‘gatekeepers of fine art.’<sup>31</sup> Prominent collectors, such as Andrew Mellon encouraged collectors to transition into patrons of art by establishing museum foundations based upon their collections.<sup>32</sup> The museums validated provenance, authenticity, and provided scholarship on the significance of the works.<sup>33</sup> Listing provenance enabled patrons to associate their reputation with the objects historical past and also display their collection in a very public manner. In effect, the value of art increased because art was no longer viewed as ‘good taste,’ but now verified as ‘museum quality.’

Alongside the growth of museum institution, auction houses began to regain popularity in London following their downfall due to the World Wars. To recapture the glamor and prestige, Peter Wilson of Sotheby’s, hired a marketing firm to promote the

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<sup>30</sup> Florence N Levy, “The Art Market,” *The American Magazine of Art* 9, no. 1 (1917): 3 [www.jstor.org/stable/23935094](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23935094).

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy R Howard, “Art Market”

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, The Guggenheim and the Whitney Museum of American Art were all founded based upon private collections. Jeremy R. Howard, “The Art Market”

1957 Wilhelm Weinberg sale of his collection of Van Gogh's.<sup>34</sup> The sale was marketed as a celebrity-filled and glamorous event, re-establishing Sotheby's reputation and also attracted new buyers. The success of Sotheby's allowed for the expansion outside of London. In 1964, Sotheby's acquired Parke-Bernet, a New York auction house and moved into America.<sup>35</sup> Christie's soon followed, expanding to New York in 1977.<sup>36</sup> The global expansion continued to open up new markets throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The art market spanned internationally, but interest in art was still dominated by the upper echelon of society. It was not until the Pop-Art movement in the 1960's and 70's that invited the rest of the world to engage.<sup>37</sup> Realizing there was an interest in art by the masses, auction houses diversified their sales to attract new buyers, adding new categories of collectibles into their auction schedule. The diversification of sales provided collectors with an opportunity to better represent their personalities through the various styles and types of objects they acquired. The relationship between the collector and collection is one of the most important attributes made during this time. It establishes the belief that there is an association between a collector's personality and their collection, which sets up why celebrity sales generate increased interest.

#### *Auctions in 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the rise of the Digital Age*

To become the multi-billion-dollar industry today, the art market underwent significant changes in how we interact with art; these changes can be traced back to the rise of the internet and the openings of new global economies.<sup>38</sup> The new economies meant there was new wealth to exploit, permitting major auction houses to open up more

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<sup>34</sup> Sotheby's in 1909 to sell fine artIbid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Christie's, "The History of Christie's Auction House," Christie's, accessed October 2019, <https://www.christies.com/auctions/the-history-of-christies-auction-house>

<sup>37</sup> Jeremy R Howard, "Art Market"

<sup>38</sup> Today, the art auction market generated 29.1 billion dollars. Clare McAndrew, "The Art Market Report," 19.

international branches.<sup>39</sup> Although both, Christie's and Sotheby's had expanded internationally and conducted auctions in places such as Hong Kong in the late 1970's and 80's, they did not have a stronghold outside of the US and Europe.<sup>40</sup> It was not until the dot.com boom in the 1990's which pushed auction houses to expand into new territories. The rise of the internet in the 2000's collapsed time zones, permitting faster and more efficient communication to occur internationally. The constant flow of information and accessibility increased buyer participation by allowing new collectors to participate in fine art auctions. The inclusion of new buyers increased the tight-knit community of high-end art collecting from about 100 collectors at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to thousands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>41</sup>

The internet provided a new way to discover objects, websites such as Artsy (2011) emerged which produced news content about the art world.<sup>42</sup> The online articles dispersed information about new artists, exhibitions and general trends, allowing collectors to build their own repertoire of knowledge. Additionally, the internet provided a new platform to conduct sales; websites such as *e-bay*, *amazon*, and *paddle8* created spaces for these online transactions to occur. Major auction houses used the online

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<sup>39</sup> The opening of the markets in China, Russia and India, due to shifts in their political climate, unlocked their economies which fostered a new generation of new wealth and collectors. Georgina Adam, *Big Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Burlington: Lunch Humphries, 2014) 31. Additionally, in 2001, the French implemented a ruled that abolished the auctioneering monopoly that had been in place since 1556, which allowed Christie's and Sotheby's to expand and conduct their first sales in Paris. Jeremy R Howard, "Art Market."

<sup>40</sup> Sotheby's held the first auction in Hong Kong in 1977, Christie's expanded internationally to New York in 1977 and held its first auction in Hong Kong in 1986. Georgina Adam, *Big Bucks: The Explosion of the Art Market in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 31

<sup>41</sup> Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, collectors buying art at over 5 million dollars was a small community of about 100 individuals who were all known within the art market. By increasing the international presence, the art market industry had to expand culturally, where multiple languages were required to conduct business. Ibid. 30

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 119



platform as well, mainly to sell lower-valued items, such as collectibles and personal belongings from important and well-known collections.<sup>43</sup>

Major auction houses also utilize the online platforms to digitally live-stream their auctions. For example, the David Bowie sale in 2016, had over 26,500 people tune in to watch as Bowie's prolific collection dispersed amongst fans and collectors.<sup>44</sup> The ability to live stream benefits the auction houses by bringing more awareness to their sales. A study done of Christie's online presence between 2012-2015 shows that the shift online saw sales from 90 different countries, and 44% were under the age of 45.<sup>45</sup> The increased engagement through online platforms has its benefits, however, auction houses still encourage individuals to visit in person. Auction houses have been experimenting with a variety of events to engage buyers with art, for instance hosting dinners with celebrated chefs or private events in exclusive venues; both would be filled with top collectors and prominent individuals from within the art world.<sup>46</sup>

Another effect from the widespread use of the internet and globalization, is emergence of a new profile of collectors. The new collectors are younger, wealthier, and coming from more diverse backgrounds and cultures, including families who may not have collected art before.<sup>47</sup> They generally lack a familiarity with the art market, but eagerly use platforms like *Instagram* to discover new works. Between 2016-2018, young millennial collectors accounted for 45% of the high-end spending—demonstrating the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 126

<sup>44</sup> "White Glove Sale of David Bowie's Art Collection," *Sotheby's*, November 2016, accessed June 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/content/dam/sothebys/PDFs/Bowie%20Collector%20Sale%20Overview.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Lori Holcomb-Holland, "Sotheby's, Christie's and Other Auction houses Adapt to Serve the Next Generation."

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

importance of their spending power within the art market.<sup>48</sup> Their active buying habits have facilitated many changes within the auction industry.

Their dominant presence within the art market has caused auction houses to rebrand, marketing themselves more towards the younger clientele. To do so, they have changed their catalogues, including more images, stories and appearing more magazine-like to entice the new collectors.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, auction houses have increased their private sales sectors to accommodate the rise of private collections at auction. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of private auctions according to Elaine Whitmire, the previous department head for private collections at Sotheby's until 2016. She said that private collection auctions used to occur about 1-2 times per year, but now there are up to 9 per season (in 2014.)<sup>50</sup> It is not just the potential significance of provenance that has driven the popularity of these sales, but the belief that the collector has amassed the collection for decades—meaning that a majority of the works have not appeared in the market in a long time.<sup>51</sup> Another reason for the increased presence of private collections is that it offer buyers' a unique experience to view a variety of objects—ranging in styles, artists and periods but all in the same place. In recent years there has been a movement, encouraged by young collectors, for auction houses to include more “themed” sales, rather than the traditional period sales.<sup>52</sup> The changing manner in the way's collectors purchase art is not only reflected in the diverse aesthetic of their collections, but more importantly in owning objects that contain a unique history or story.

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<sup>48</sup> Clare McAndrew, “The Art Market 2019,” 22

<sup>49</sup> Lori Holcomb-Holland, “Sotheby's, Christie's and Other Auction houses Adapt to Serve the Next Generation.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

The instant access to images through the digitization of art has created the need for a new marketing tactic—story-telling. By connecting objects to their historical pasts, they contain a unique essence, that no one, not even a photograph, can capture. The growing popularity of storytelling has led to an increase in collector's infatuation with provenance, or the "x-factor"<sup>53</sup> (specifically celebrity, politician, or famous art collectors).<sup>54</sup> There are two reasons for this, the first is that the object has already passed a "quality test," validating the objects aesthetic value.<sup>55</sup> Secondly, the provenance provides a unique, and 'one of a kind,' experience for the buyer; enabling their identity to become a "part of the legacy...[and] the history."<sup>56</sup> Specifically for celebrity provenance, adding the new buyers name to the provenance record, creates a legitimate, although tangential, connection between the two individuals. The association implies that there are shared characteristics between the two, fabricating a personal connection through their mutual enjoyment and interest in the object.

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<sup>53</sup> "Art + Celebrity= Value Inflation," *Bloomberg*, published November 4, 2010, Accessed May 2, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-11-04/art-plus-celebrity-equals-value-inflation>

<sup>54</sup> Lori Holcomb-Holland, "In Bids, Celebrity Cachet Brings a Premium," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2014, Accessed August 9, 2019,

<sup>55</sup> Patrick Van der Vorst, "The David Bowie Phenomenon: Collected by Celebrities Creates Draw"

<sup>56</sup> Lori Holcomb-Holland, "In Bids, Celebrity Cachet Brings a Premium"

## Chapter 2: Fascination with Celebrity

Today, single-seller celebrity auctions draw in international attention, with thousands of viewers and often doubling or tripling the pre-sale high estimate. To understand why these types of sales are a success, it is important to first define 'celebrity' and evaluate our relationship to them. By understanding the relationship between celebrities and society, only then can we understand how our fascination influences lot prices at auction and the appeal of celebrity provenance.

Before we begin to understand the effects of celebrity provenance at auction, it is important to first define the term. According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, a celebrity is "someone who is celebrated; fame."<sup>57</sup> The dictionary definition provides a solid foundation for the concept of celebrity; however, it does not explain *how* someone achieves fame or *why* the celebration occurs. According to Daniel Boorstin, he defines a celebrity as "a human pseudo-event" and "is known for their well-knownness."<sup>58</sup> What Boorstin means is that celebrities are "inauthentic" fabrications of human desires, their fame strips away their true self in order to appeal to the masses and generate attention.<sup>59</sup> Their current existence and prominence within society bears little relation to their talent, brilliance, heroism, or family legacy, but rather their attention retention; meaning they only retain celebrity status by their ability to conform to public desire.

Celebrities uncanny ability to capture attention is generated through media. Since the 1920's, with the introduction of gossip columns, celebrities have situated themselves as a dominant fixture in society.<sup>60</sup> Through media, they become a combination of

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<sup>57</sup> "Celebrity," Meriam-Webster, accessed November 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/celebrity>

<sup>58</sup> Joshua Gamson, "The Unwatched Life is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture." *PLMA* 126, no. 4 (2011): 1061-069, [www.jstor.org/stable/41414175](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41414175).

<sup>59</sup> Michael Newbury, "Celebrity Watching." *American Literary History* 12, no. 1/2 (2000): 272-273, [www.jstor.org/stable/490251](http://www.jstor.org/stable/490251).

<sup>60</sup> Michael Newbury, "Celebrity Watching," 272-273.

“commercialized commodities” and “personalized reflections” of culture.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, the publicizing nature of media diminishes the boundary between their public and private lives, downplaying celebrities from ‘extraordinary’ into ‘ordinary’ beings, who are just “luckier, prettier, and better marketed,” than the average person.<sup>62</sup> The creation of the narrative that “are just like us,” allows people to “construct identities” or “model themselves on celebrities they admire or envy” due to their belief that they *could* be that person.<sup>63</sup>

By constructing our identities around celebrities, we unknowingly grant them “instant authority,” allowing their influence to change our perceptions and societal behaviors, including purchasing habits.<sup>64</sup> Marketing agencies capitalize on the ‘instant authority’ by using celebrities for endorsements; however, endorsements only works if the celebrities presence legitimizes the product or idea.<sup>65</sup> The use of endorsements may not always be straight forward. Using social media, celebrities influence behavior just by living their lives; by posting pictures of themselves we are able to see what they wear, where they hangout, and what they support; the correlation between social media and sales reflects the “monitiz[ation] of our li[v]es.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood, and Samantha Bennett, "Popular Music, Stars and Stardom: Definitions, Discourses, Interpretations," In *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom*, edited by LOY STEPHEN, RICKWOOD JULIE, and BENNETT SAMANTHA, 3. Australia: ANU Press, 2018. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv301dk8.5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv301dk8.5).

<sup>62</sup> Joshua Gamson, "The Unwatched Life Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture," 1062

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 1062.

<sup>64</sup> Barbara Goldsmith, "The Meaning of Celebrity," The New York Times, Published December 4, 1983, accessed October 18, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/04/magazine/the-meaning-of-celebrity.html>

<sup>65</sup> Celebrity endorsements can increase sales by up to 4% on a single campaign Steve Olenski "How Brands Should Use Celebrities for Endorsements," Forbes. Published July 20, 2016, Accessed July 24, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2016/07/20/how-brands-should-use-celebrities-for-endorsements/#29dc73c85593>

<sup>66</sup> In 2015, Pierce Bronson posted an Instagram of himself posing with a Marc Newson Chaise Lounge at Philips London. The chaise sold for £2.4 million pounds, setting a design record for a living artist. Ibid.

The inherent monetization of celebrities is heavily capitalized upon in the auction industry. Attaching a sale to a well-known personality not only increases interest but also serves as an endorsement for the objects at auction. Their 'instant authority' provides a sense of legitimacy to the quality and value. Additionally, the use of photographs of celebrities "holding, wearing, signing or using the piece" influences value.<sup>67</sup> The photographs of celebrities' interacting with the items for sale authenticates their interest by revealing the personal connection between themselves and the object.

However, not all objects with celebrity provenance do well. Similar to endorsements, celebrity presence only works if the association between their name and the item makes sense in legitimizing the quality of the object. For instance, in 2010, Demi Moore sold the painting *Frere et Soeur* by William Bouguereau at Sotheby's.<sup>68</sup> The painting was estimated to bring in 1.5 million USD, but only achieved 1,082,500 USD.<sup>69</sup> The paintings inability its typical the lack of authority she has over the 19<sup>th</sup> century French academic paintings. Meaning, her incongruent presence did not provide an enhanced sense of quality. The lack of 'instant authority' exhibited by Demi Moore, illustrates just how powerful a name is.

The power of the name not only grants authority over material objects, but can take away all authority in a singular instance.<sup>70</sup> In a world dominated by digital media and mass communication, celebrity provenance creates the illusion of a real and tangible personal connection between the celebrity and the buyer. The belief that celebrity provenance creates a connection through shared qualities and characteristics,

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<sup>67</sup>Laura Woolley, "Tips on Collecting," Julien's Auction, accessed November 2019, <https://www.juliensauctions.com/tips-on-collecting>

<sup>68</sup>"Art + Celebrity= Value Inflation," *Bloomberg*

<sup>69</sup> Sotheby's, *19<sup>th</sup> Century European Art*, New York: Sotheby's, November 2010, e-catalog, accessed October 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2010/19th-century-european-art-n08673/lot.23.html>

<sup>70</sup> Lucy Trench, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, London: V & A Publishing, 2010, 56

enhances the buyers desire to own the objects.<sup>71</sup> However, the moral association can go awry when celebrities act out in ways that compromise their good social standing in accordance to societal norms. Back in 2010, following Mel Gibson's anti-Semitic outburst, his estimated \$15 million Parrish collection only sold for \$10.9 million at a Christie's auction.<sup>72</sup> The results indicate the lack of desire to be associated with the actor, illustrating the belief that personality is warped into the material objects.

The reflection of characteristics upon the buyer can also create an opposite reaction, creating a strong sense of desire to own the objects. Especially for celebrities who did not grow up and share their lives in the digital age. The "mystique of not knowing everything," an attribute of older and/or deceased celebrities is another important factor when considering the premium of celebrity provenance.<sup>73</sup> The physical presence, embodied by the objects, creates a sense of physical realness, bringing the celebrity to life again. Additionally, deceased celebrities' inability to disappoint the public elevates them to a new level of fame, since they no longer produce new material or contribute to general society.<sup>74</sup>

With everyone possessing the ability to become famous in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of differentiating celebrity characteristics and how they are implemented is crucial to understand in order to answer the question of how and why single-seller celebrity sales effect value at auction. Combining contemporary societies fascination with celebrities, alongside the changing profile of collectors, we begin to see the

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<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Paton, "On the Auction Block: The Pull of Celebrity," The New York Times, September 7, 2017, accessed June 2019  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/fashion/audrey-hepburn-mario-testino-auctions.html>.

<sup>72</sup> "Art + Celebrity= Value Inflation," *Bloomberg*

<sup>73</sup> Scott Reyburn, "Audrey Hepburn Shines at Auction, But Celebrity Sales are Changing," The New York Times, September 29, 2017, accessed June 26, 2019,  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/arts/audrey-hepburn-vivien-leigh-auction.html>

<sup>74</sup> Barbara Goldsmith, "The Meaning of Celebrity"

influence of celebrity provenance at auction and why it is occurring. The next section will look at two single-seller celebrity auctions and examine objects that experienced the celebrity premium and others that did not. The study hopes to uncover different underlying reasons for why celebrity provenance has such a great effect on certain objects, but is passed over on objects.



### Chapter 3: Case Studies

The two cases studies that will be presented upon in this chapter include Christie's Paris 2009 sale of the collection of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé and Sotheby's London 2016 David Bowie Sale. These sales represent important single-seller auctions that have occurred in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The celebrity's personal connection to the city where the sale happened is vital in understanding the performance of the auction as a whole. The collectors represent different types celebrities, but are both tangentially related to the art world through their notable professions. Understanding the celebrity's relationship to the art world is important for analyzing why certain objects were more effected by provenance and why others showed little, or no, price inflation.

Based off of the research, there are a few hypotheses on how celebrity provenance will affect the value. Objects declared as favorites, or bear a personal association to the owner are expected to outperform the typical market. Additionally, with the rise of 'storytelling,' objects that are not 'one of a kind' will most likely be subjected to a value increase. The research also states that extraneous factors, such as photographs depicting celebrities interacting with the works will increase the perceived value. It is important to keep in mind Michael Findlay's theory that "great works" will be less effected by the presence of celebrity provenance whereas "modest or intermediate works" tend to be more greatly affected.<sup>75</sup> Using these hypotheses as guidelines to uncover the exact nature of how celebrity provenance is used and why generates a premium for certain works of art.

Within both auctions there will be a total of six objects looked at. Three of the objects, the 'highs,' *the items that are influenced by celebrity ownership*, and three items

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Findlay, *The Value of Art Money, Power, Beauty*, Munich: Prestel, 2014, 39-40

that are the, 'the lows,' *items that remain unaffected by the celebrity presence*. Using the hypotheses gathered from the research, the relevancy of provenance on the ultimate effect of the objects price will be evaluated. To do this, there are three comparables for each item to help ground the objects typical market. Establishing a foundation for each object is crucial for an analysis of the objects' overall performance.

### *The Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé Collection*

Dubbed "the sale of the century" and the "sale of all sales," Christie's auction of the collection of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé set the precedent for celebrity auctions.<sup>76</sup> The spectacular event took place in Paris in 2009 at the Grand Palais, the only venue large enough to contain their massive collection that they accumulated for over fifty years together.<sup>77</sup> Pierre Bergé chose Paris specifically; he wanted to honor the legacy of Yves Saint Laurent (YSL). It is impossible to separate YSL from Paris, where he created a fashion empire that still carries on his influential legacy in the fashion world. Despite losing his battle to AIDS in 2008, Yves Saint Laurent is still one of the most recognizable names and serves as the epitome of good taste in the luxury fashion world. To honor Saint Laurent, the auction donated a portion of its proceeds to Sidaction, a foundation started by the pair in 1994 to research HIV/AIDS, as well as other cultural institutions they supported.<sup>78</sup> Their shared role as activists in the HIV/AIDS movement allows for identification with them, grounding them in the narrative celebrities "are just like us." By speaking up and starting foundations for research, the two men use their status to raise awareness and influence change.

The sale took place in February 2009, occurring simultaneously with the massive global financial crisis. However, Christie's intense marketing emphasizing the

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<sup>76</sup> Christiane De Nicolay-Mazery, *The Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé Collection: The Sale of the Century*. Paris: Flammarion, 2009, 6

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 6

importance, rarity and quality of the works ensured the success of the sale. On the first night alone, the auction generated over \$264 million, setting records for Matisse, Duchamp, and Brancusi—just to name a few.<sup>79</sup> The total sale, including buyer's premium, amounted to 373,935,500 EUR.<sup>80</sup> Their marketing additionally drew in over 30,000 people to view the preview at the Grand Palais, including many celebrities, politicians, and institution representatives who traveled far to see the spectacular collection.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, a lucky 1,000 visitors toured the pairs apartment on 55 rue de Babylone, their permanent residence since 1972, providing an *in-situ* look at the designer's collection.<sup>82</sup> Their apartment embodied the notion that they truly "lived surrounded by artworks," as Bergé stated in an interview.<sup>83</sup> The tours offered a possibility for guests to gain a deeper understanding of what Bergé meant, by allowing them to witness firsthand the juxtaposition of periods, styles and textures situated within the three-floored apartment. Additionally, photographs published of the apartment illustrated how seamlessly their art fit into their lives, emphasizing the highly personal nature of their collection.

As a founder of the fashion empire bearing his name, *Yves Saint Laurent*, there is no question regarding the status of his taste. His luxury designs are often created from a "dialogue with art," drawing inspiration from artworks he admired. His career began in 1957, at age 21, when Christian Dior passed away, he became the successor, and also

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<sup>79</sup> Over 1,200 people attended the sale on the first night. Steven Erlanger, "Saint Laurent Art Sale Brings in \$264 Million," *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, February 24, 2009, accessed November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/arts/design/24auction.html?mtrref=www.google.com&assetType=REGIWALL>

<sup>80</sup> Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>81</sup> Christiane De Nicolay-Mazery, *The Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé Collection: The Sale of the Century*, 9

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 9

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 9

the youngest courtier in the fashion industry.<sup>84</sup> Yves Saint Laurent long-lasting success in the fashion industry, through his revolutionary designs, he gave “women a new freedom,” through chic styles that embodied the fluid nature between art and design.<sup>85</sup> The flawless and unsurpassed styles grant him the necessary authority to serve as a tastemaker in the fine art world. For these reasons I hypothesize that objects associated to Yves Saint Laurent’s career will experience the “celebrity factor.” Additionally, due to their French nationalism, I believe that French artists will be better received in general. However, due to their sense of ‘mystery,’ because they did not live their life in the same limelight that Bowie did, I believe that their ownership will result in premiums that may not be noticed right away.

### *Celebrity Provenance*

As stated earlier, a result of celebrity fascination is societies attempt to construct identities surrounding the famed individuals. By identifying with celebrities, through shared beliefs, morals and goals, it creates the desire to establish a connection. Using the idea that collections reflect personality, and the physicality of the object provides a tangible realness, it is understandable why certain objects over perform compared to their market. Looking at Édouard Manet’s pastel, *Jeaune Fille en Chapeau d’été* (Figure 1),<sup>86</sup> illustrates the pull of celebrity. Manet, a household artist name, easily fetches prices north of a million for his oil paintings, however, for pastels, the market is quite different. *Jeaune Fille en Chapeau d’été* was estimated to sell between 500,000-700,000 EUR, an aggressive estimate compared to recent sales. The pastel sold for 721,000 EUR,<sup>87</sup> only

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<sup>84</sup> “Homage to Piet Mondrian,” Museum of Yves Saint Laurent, Accessed November 28, 2019, <https://museeyslparis.com/en/biography/lhommage-a-piet-mondrian>

<sup>85</sup> Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, Paris: Christie’s, February 2009, 5

<sup>86</sup> Lot Number 3 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.christies.com/collection-yves-saint-laurent-22294.aspx?saletitle=>

<sup>87</sup> Lot Number 3 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog

slightly above the high estimate, but when compared to Manet's pastel market, the figure is extremely high. The pastel depicts a young woman wearing contemporary French fashion, only the shoulders up, the figure does not take up the entire canvas. Manet often left the backgrounds untouched. Recent sales of similar pastels sold for 337,000 USD (Figure 2, Sotheby's 2007)<sup>88</sup>, bought-in (Figure 3, Sotheby's 2008)<sup>89</sup> and 296,000 USD (Figure 4, Christie's 2005).<sup>90</sup> The pastels, share similar qualities in size, material, figure, and execution to the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé piece and only have come to auction nine times between 1999-2019, with an average price of about 400,000-500,000 USD. Of these nine, only six were unique, one piece has been offered three times and another has been offered twice.

Another French artist, Henri Laurens achieved a record price for his terracotta sculpture, *Femme Accroupie* (Figure 5).<sup>91</sup> Standing at 14 ¼ inches, and part of an edition of 7, the cubist sculptor experimented with the female body. The price realized was 217,000 EUR, a 261% increase over the high estimate.<sup>92</sup> Laurens experimented with the 'crouching woman' pose in a variety of sculptures throughout this period (1920's-1930's). Meaning, not only are exact copies of the YSL and Pierre Bergé sculpture available, but many similar ones experiment with the combination of

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<sup>88</sup> Hammer Price, Lot Number 160 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (New York: Sotheby's, November 2007), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2007/impressionist-modern-art-day-sale-n08360.html>

<sup>89</sup> Lot Number 314 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (London: Sotheby's, June 2008), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/fr/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.314.html/2008/impressionist-modern-art-day-sale-l08008>

<sup>90</sup> Lot Number 364 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2005) e-catalog, accessed December 2019. <https://www.christies.com/impressionist-and-modern-art-19602.aspx?lid=1&dt=011220190940&saletitle=>

<sup>91</sup> Lot Number 21 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>92</sup> Estimate was 40,000-60,000 Euros, Ibid.

primitivism and cubism. The sculptures sell on average between 60,000-80,000 USD.<sup>93</sup> Since 2000, 9 *Femme Accroupie* sculptures come to auction, they are not all from the same edition and express slight variations in their execution. However, in 2015, a *Femme Accroupie* sculpture, part of the same edition as the Yves Saint Laurent and Bergé sculpture, appeared at auction but it only fetched 68,750 EUR (Figure 7, Sotheby's Paris, 2015).<sup>94</sup> The price difference between the exact same object underlines the importance of celebrity provenance in creating unique stories that differentiate like objects.

The painting, *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow and Black* (Figure 9, Christie's Paris, 2009) sold for 21,569,000 EUR, over 11 million EUR over the high estimate.<sup>95</sup> Although Findlay suggests that 'great works' tend to fetch prices based on their own merits, this painting is an anomaly. The Mondrian market does very well, with a similar piece sold in 2014 for 15,202,500 GBP (Figure 10),<sup>96</sup> 2008 for 2,148,500 GBP (Figure 11)<sup>97</sup> and in 2007 for 2,932,00 GBP (Figure 12).<sup>98</sup> These paintings are similar colors and all from after 1922—which is a notable year since it signifies a shift in Mondrian's style.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Price estimated based upon Figure 6, Figure 7, and Figure 8, please refer to appendix A.

<sup>94</sup> This is the hammer price, it does not include the buyer's premium. Lot Number 14 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionniste et Moderne*, (Paris: Sotheby's, June 2015), e-catalog, accessed September 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2015/art-impressionniste-moderne-pf1506.html>

<sup>95</sup> Lot Number 42 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>96</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Sotheby's June 2014) e-catalog

<sup>97</sup> Lot Number 53 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008) e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.christies.com/impressionist-and-modern-art-20850.aspx?saletitle=>

<sup>98</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, London: Christie's, June 2007, e-catalog, accessed June 2019, e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.christies.com/impressionist-and-modern-art-20850.aspx?saletitle&saletitle=>

<sup>99</sup> Lot Number 42 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

Although the Saint Laurent and Bergé's piece is larger than the comparables, the increased price is a factor of the enhanced history due to the association between the designer and the painting.

Unlike the other two examples regarding the positive effects of celebrity provenance, the Mondrian *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow and Black* (Figure 9), represents a unique case on the effects of provenance. Painted in 1922, the Di Stijl group artist, Piet Mondrian, created a set of dynamic and abstract paintings. The piece is notable within Mondrian's oeuvre, but its fame has been solidified in history by Yves Saint Laurent himself. It is most notably known as the painting that inspired the 1965 Dior Autumn-Winter collection. Saint Laurent utilized the geometric nature, "paying homage" to the artist he greatly admired.<sup>100</sup> Following the collection debut, Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sought out to acquire the piece that inspired the collection, which also solidified Saint Laurent's reputation in the French fashion industry. They acquired the painting in 1978 and is among three Mondrian paintings in their collection.<sup>101</sup>

Not every work in the sale performs as well as they are expected, even with the celebrity provenance. For instance, Edvard Munch's *Bord de Mer (Seaside)* (Figure 13) painting only sold for 1,129,000 EUR, a figure below the low estimate.<sup>102</sup> Compared to the market for Edvard Munch, the painting did not achieve better than its typical market value, in fact it did worse. Looking at the two other paintings, which sold for (Figure 15)

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<sup>100</sup> "Homage to Piet Mondrian," Museum of Yves Saint Laurent

<sup>101</sup> Lot Number 42 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>102</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

2,484,500 GBP<sup>103</sup> and (Figure 16) 3,828,000 GBP.<sup>104</sup> The sales illustrate the emphasis that quality impacts value even in the presence of a celebrity ownership. A recent sale in 2008, an Edvard Munch *Vampire* (Figure 14), sold for 38,000,000 USD.<sup>105</sup> The painting, part of the collection called the *Frieze of Life*, represents some of the most valuable works completed by Munch. The paintings often depict the Aasgardstrand landscape, an important place for Munch. The lot essay stresses to emphasize this point, stating *Bord de Mer* was also painted in this area, drawing a connection between Munch's most sought after works and this piece.<sup>106</sup> The association ultimately had no effect on the price realized.

Another painting not influenced by the celebrity factor was lot 25, Juan Gris' *Le Violon* (Figure 17).<sup>107</sup> The painting sold for 3,873,000 EUR, a price that is below the low estimate by 127,000 EUR. The painting depicts a violin, a popular motif in Juan Gris' work. Similar paintings by Juan Gris suggest a stable market. Looking at the *Guitarre* (figure 19),<sup>108</sup> which sold in 2008 at Sotheby's for 6,578,500 USD. The hammer price was situated within the estimates. The same year at Christies, the painting *Violon et Journal* (figure 20)<sup>109</sup> sold for 3,940,500 GBP—also within the estimates. However, the year following the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sale, the painting, *Violon et*

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<sup>103</sup> The price realized includes the buyer's premium. The estimates were 1,500,000-2,000,000 GBP. Lot number 69 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog

<sup>104</sup> The Hammer price does not include the buyer's premium, the painting was estimated at 1,000,000-1,500,000 GBP. Lot Number 41 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Sotheby's, February 2007), e-catalog

<sup>105</sup> Lot Number 21 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Sotheby's, November 2008), e-catalog

<sup>106</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>107</sup> Lot Number 25 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>108</sup> Lot number 45 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*. (New York: Sotheby's, November 2008), e-catalog

<sup>109</sup> Lot Number 43: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog



*Guitarre* (Figure 18) sold at Christie's for an astounding 28,642,500 USD.<sup>110</sup> *Violon et Guitarre* is from the same year as the YSL and Bergé piece, only it is slightly larger. The cubist features are more prominent and contains a brighter color palette. Additionally, Juan Gris claimed that *Violon et Guitare* is one of his favorite paintings, possibly why it is was valued higher.<sup>111</sup>

The lack of the celebrity premium, evident through the painting's stability within the Juan Gris market, emphasizes the point made by Michael Findlay. High-end art is less influenced by celebrity ownership because it is able to achieve high values on its own merits. Since the market for Juan Gris is typically within the millions, there is not an appeal to increase the value further just because of celebrity ownership. Although the painting was displayed in the dining room of their apartment, it otherwise lacked a personal relationship with the pair. Demonstrating that high value works will retain their market stability and are less likely to be impacted by the notable provenance unless there is a unique feature that directly associates the owners to the piece.

Unlike Juan Gris, the artist Fernand Léger experienced a low value compared to his typical market. The painting, *Composition Dan l'usine* (Figure 21) only sold for 5,553,000 EUR, 47,000 EUR below the low estimate.<sup>112</sup> Similar paintings by the artist achieved 14,320,000 USD in 2007 (Figure 23),<sup>113</sup> and 16,726,000 USD in 2001 (Figure

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<sup>110</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2010), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.christies.com/impressionist-and-modern-evening-22589.aspx?saletitle&saletitle=>

<sup>111</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2010), e-catalog

<sup>112</sup> Lot Number 40 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>113</sup> Lot Number 30 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Sotheby's, May 2007), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2007/impressionist-and-modern-art-evening-sale-n08314.html>

24).<sup>114</sup> The paintings are all thematically connected by the mechanical motif, and all had similar estimates. Even after the Yves Saint Laurent sale, in 2017 a painting sold for 11,447,500 USD (Figure 22),<sup>115</sup> illustrating that there was not downfall in the market before the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sale. Within their collection, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé owned five Léger works. Three were on display in their living room and received no preferential treatment in terms of placement along the wall.<sup>116</sup> The anomaly that occurred in the value can be attributed to the presence of five other Léger paintings in the sale. Specifically, lots 38-40, which are all visually similar and were auctioned off back to back. By placing the similar objects in close proximity, the “celebrity factor” is diminished due to the increased chance buyers have to purchase the painting. The Léger painting illustrates the unique idea that the “celebrity factor” is diminished when a high volume of similar materials is presented especially when they share similar historical prominence, aesthetic qualities and relationships with the owners.

#### Bowie/Collector

“Art was, seriously, the only thing I’d ever wanted to own. It has always been for me a stable nourishment. I use it. It can change the way I feel in the mornings. The same work can change me in different ways, depending on what I am going through”—David Bowie<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Lot Number 9 in: Christie’s, *Impressionist and Modern Art, Including the Collection of René Gaffé Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie’s, November 2001) e-catalog, accessed June 2019.

<https://www.christies.com/SaleLanding/index.aspx?intsaleid=17358&lid=1&saletitle=>  
<sup>115</sup> Lot Number 18A in: Christie’s, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie’s, May 2017), e-catalog, accessed June 2019,

<https://www.christies.com/SaleLanding/index.aspx?intsaleid=26793&lid=1&saletitle=>  
<sup>116</sup> Christiane De Nicolay-Mazery, *The Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé Collection: The Sale of the Century*, 62

<sup>117</sup> Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*. London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 9

The quote illustrates the strong relationship David Bowie had with art. Although initially, he was not taken seriously as an art connoisseur, an observation made by his close friend William Boyd back in the 1990's. Boyd and Bowie both sat on the board of the art magazine, *Modern Painters*, a magazine dedicated to write about art and artists. Karen Wright, the director of *Modern Painters*, specifically wanted “non-art” professionals to join the board to offer their insight that would be enjoyed and understood by the general public.<sup>118</sup> The opportunity allowed Bowie to flourish and unexpectedly established himself as a prominent and respected figure within the art world.

David Bowie was able to cross boundaries, from the music to movies, activism, and art. He embodied a free spirit, providing him with the necessary confidence to state his opinions openly, dress how he wanted to dress and live his life according to himself. He did not shy away from his public fame, but embraced it—encouraging the world around him to follow their passions and live freely. He possessed an uncanny ability to connect and resonate with anyone, never making someone feel insignificant by his globally recognized fame.<sup>119</sup>

As a collector, Bowie was driven by the notion that “ideas mattered and that the way we see the world has an enormous impact on the one we build, both personally and physically.”<sup>120</sup> Which was heavily influential in the manner in which he collected art. He did not care for popular opinions, did not follow the social norms but rather pioneered the art world on his own. He read extensively about art, art theories, and wrote about it too, emphasizing the importance of art in his life. What can be learned about his passion for art is that nothing in his collection was chosen at random, he has a reason for every

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.9

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 9

<sup>120</sup> Ibid 10

purchase—choosing “artists he admired and responded to intellectually and emotionally, no matter their popularity.”<sup>121</sup> This method allowed Bowie to build a collection that served as “intimate window into [his] mind” and “is a perfect reflection of his varied relationships and his visual and intellectual pursuits art collector.”<sup>122</sup>

As a globally celebrated musician, but also a respected presence in the art world, grants Bowie the “instant authority” over fine art and design. Additionally, the highly personalized collection, with each object carefully chosen by Bowie himself, captures an essence of Bowie’s persona within the physical object itself. The objects not only capture his essence, but also serve as a “window” into his mind, allowing buyers a chance to deeply connect with the late musician. The realness provided by the physical object “evokes the personal life” of the celebrity and allowing their life to help the “viewer comprehend their own lives.”<sup>123</sup> For these reasons, I hypothesize that the “celebrity factor” will create a significant premium for objects that Bowie talked about and items that the artist and items that influence his music—because these two offer the greatest insight into the mind of the late great musician. Additionally, due to his unique characteristic to shy away from ‘mainstream’ art, lower value objects might achieve record prices due to the buyers’ curiosity of why Bowie owned the item.

#### *Celebrity Provenance*

The painting, *Head of Gerda Boehm*, by Frank Auerbach, exceeded expectations and sold 660% above the high estimate expected, at 3,798,000 GBP during the Sotheby’s London auction (Figure 25).<sup>124</sup> The price towers over similar Auerbach sales,

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 18

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. 18

<sup>123</sup> Lucy Trench, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, London: V & A Publishing, 2010, 57

<sup>124</sup> The paintings estimate was 300,000-500,000 GBP. Lot number 18 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby’s, November 2016), e-catalog, Accessed June 2019.

which generally range between 900,000-1,100,000 GBP.<sup>125</sup> The highly emotional brush strokes evoked a response from the late singer. In an interview in with Michael Kimmelman in 1998, Bowie describes his relationship with the Auerbach stating “Somebody I like very much indeed is Frank Auerbach. I think there are some mornings that if we hit each other a certain way, myself and a portrait of Auerbach—the work can magnify the kind of depression I’m going through. It will give spiritual weight to my angst.”<sup>126</sup> The way that Bowie relates to the painting offers the chance for collectors to experience the same emotions that he felt when looking at the painting, allowing for a personal connection to be forged between Bowie and the buyer. It is understandable why the painting out-performed pre-sale estimates due to the highly personal relationship between Bowie and the work.

The *Head of Gerda Boehm* not only elicits an emotional response, but also demonstrates Bowie’s artistic literacy. When talking about the Auerbach painting, he describes it as the ultimate example of what Auerbach learned from David Bomberg (David Bowie’s favorite artist).<sup>127</sup> Bowie’s ability to speak to the painting’s origins and its relation to other artists is an important quality that increases his authority over the British works. By going in depth, beyond his emotional reaction to the painting, Bowie justifies why the painting holds important historical value. His knowledge of art and why he purchases certain pieces is often commented on by family and friends. His art advisor, Kate Chertavian, describes Bowie’s collection as a compilation of artists and artworks

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<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2016/bowie-collector-part-i-modern-contemporary-art-evening-auction-l16142.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Please refer to figures 26, 27, 28 in Appendix C

<sup>126</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “TALKING ART WITH/David Bowie; A Musician’s Parallel Passion,” The New York Times. The New York Times, June 14, 1998. Accessed November 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/14/arts/talking-art-with-david-bowie-a-musician-s-parallel-passion.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 85

that are “critically important and art historically relevant”, even if the importance was not immediately recognized.<sup>128</sup> She continues to describe her working relationship with Bowie, that he was constantly reading and learning new information and fully immersed himself in his passions. The immersion grants him the ‘instant authority,’ enabling Bowie to stand in as an endorsement for certain periods or types of art, especially for 20<sup>th</sup> century British artists.

Another painting that did exceptionally well at the Bowie/Collector auction was lot 36, Meret Oppenheim’s *La Condition Humaine* (Figure 29)<sup>129</sup>. The painting was estimated at 20,000-30,000 GBP but bids drove the price up to 197,000 GBP. Oppenheim was a leader in the surrealist movement, often including feminist imagery in her works. Her paintings infrequent appearance at auction might be a contributing fact to the high price, but the value associated with the Bowie auction far surpasses her typical value. The surrealist works range from 98,500 CHF<sup>130</sup> (Figure 30, Sotheby’s Zurich, 2012), 31,250 USD<sup>131</sup> (Figure 31, Sotheby’s New York, 2010) to 131,450 CHF<sup>132</sup> (Figure 32, Christie’s Zurich 2002), and most often sell in Zurich. The effect of celebrity provenance for the piece can be understood by the catalog essay, which describes the painting as a “open to interpretation and its undetermined nature is perhaps indicative of

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<sup>128</sup> Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 18

<sup>129</sup> Lot number 36 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby’s, November 2016), e-catalog

<sup>130</sup> Lot Number 99 in: Sotheby’s, *Schweizer Kunst/Swiss Art*, (Zurich: Sotheby’s, December 2012), e-catalog, accessed October 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2012/schweizer-kunst-swiss-art-zh1206.html>

<sup>131</sup> Lot Number 110 in: Sotheby’s, *Impressionist and Modern Art Including Russian Art* (New York: Sotheby’s, March 2010), e-catalog, accessed September 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2010/impressionist-and-modern-art-including-russian-art-n08614.html>

<sup>132</sup> Lot Number 96 in: Christie’s, *Schweizer Kunst*, (Zurich: Christie’s, November 2002), e-catalog, Accessed September 2019, <https://www.christies.com/schweizer-kunst-18019.aspx?lid=1&dt=121120190638&saletitle=>

the inherent freedom found in the human condition.”<sup>133</sup> His perception that our world view impacts how we live and grow is emphasized within this piece through the freedom elicited through the openness of the void. The painting perfectly captures the essence behind Bowie’s collection—pieces that are emotionally and intellectually engaging, and reflect aspects of the human condition.

Aside from fine art, Bowie was deeply infatuated by Memphis design for its ability to “deconstruct and intellectualize the process of design.”<sup>134</sup> He purchased the *Radio-Phonograph* by Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni in 2014, two years before he passed away and the object was estimated at 800-1,200 GBP, but sold for 257,000 GBP (Figure 33).<sup>135</sup> Recent sales reveal the importance of the “celebrity factor”. In 2016, a *Radio-Phonograph* by Giacomo and Castiglioni sold for only 3,250 USD (Figure 36).<sup>136</sup> Maybe the popularity by Bowie owning the object increased the value post-sale? Well, research has revealed otherwise. In 2018, a *Radio-Phonograph* sold for 1,800 EUR<sup>137</sup> (Figure 34) and a different one also in 2018 was bought in<sup>138</sup> (Figure 35). The sales illustrate the astounding effect celebrity provenance can play, since the objects are manufactured, not one of a kind, maybe different colors and slightly different size, but the one major difference is who owned it.

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<sup>133</sup> Lot number 36 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 138

<sup>134</sup> Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part III: Design: Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group*, London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 3

<sup>135</sup> Lot Number 446 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part III: Design: Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group*, (London: Sotheby’s, November 2016), e-catalog, Accessed June 2019. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2016/bowie-collector-part-i-modern-contemporary-art-evening-auction-l16142.html>

<sup>136</sup> Lot Number 316 in: Wright, *Design*, (Chicago: Wright, October 2016), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.wright20.com/auctions/2016/10/design#grid-3g5gob>

<sup>137</sup> Lot Number 165 in: Cambi Casa d’Aste, *Design 200*, (Milan: Cambi, September 2018), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.cambiaste.com/uk/auction-0381/deaign.asp?action=reset&pag=6#catalogue>

<sup>138</sup> Lot Number 1015 in: Aste Boetto, *Selected Design, Selected Lighting, Murano Design*, (Milan: Aste Boetto, April 2018), e-catalog, accessed June 2019. <http://www.asteboetto.it/pdf/1803S.pdf>

With many objects achieving record prices due to the “celebrity factor,” not every item was so lucky. One of Bowie’s favorite artists, David Bomberg, an artist he passionately collected and with 12 of his works up at auction. Bowie is often quoted speaking about his admiration for the artist and the Bowie catalog even includes Richard Corks essay, *The Spirit in the Mass: The Art of David Bomberg*.<sup>139</sup> The painting, *Plazuela de La Paz, Ronda* (Figure 37) sold for 68,750 GBP, about 32,000 GBP below the low estimate.<sup>140</sup> The dark and abstract colors draw in the viewer, but it lacks the vibrant coloration that other Bomberg’s typically possess. The market for Bomberg is all over, with a 2014 sale resulting in 146,500 GBP (Figure 40),<sup>141</sup> a 2016 sale for 149,000 GBP (Figure 39)<sup>142</sup> and then a 2018 sale for only 85,000 GBP (Figure 38).<sup>143</sup> Remarkably, the Bowie piece is still undervalued. The importance of this feat signifies that Bowie’s Bomberg was not of any particular interest to Bomberg collectors. They are willing to pay more for a painting not associated with Bowie, evident by the 2016, also occurring in November in London. The similar timing of the sales illustrates that the “celebrity factor” does not overpower the factor of quality for the passionate collectors of a particular artist.

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<sup>139</sup> Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*. London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 55

<sup>140</sup> Lot number 40 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby’s, November 2016) lot 36, e-catalog, Accessed June 2019. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2016/bowie-collector-part-i-modern-contemporary-art-evening-auction-l16142.html>.

<sup>141</sup> Lot Number 40 in: Christie’s, *Modern British and Irish Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie’s June 2014), e-catalog, accessed 2019, [https://www.christies.com/modern-british-and-irish-24620.aspx?lid=1&dt=121120190657&saletitle=#lot\\_5812075](https://www.christies.com/modern-british-and-irish-24620.aspx?lid=1&dt=121120190657&saletitle=#lot_5812075)

<sup>142</sup> Lot Number 28 in: Christie’s, *Modern British and Irish Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie’s, November 2016), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.christies.com/modern-british-and-irish-26143.aspx?saletitle&saletitle=>

<sup>143</sup> Lot Number 164 in: Christie’s, *Modern British Day Sale*, (London: Christie’s, June 2018), e-catalog, Accessed June 2019, [https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/print\\_sale.aspx?saleid=27402&lid=1](https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/print_sale.aspx?saleid=27402&lid=1)



Bowie's interest with Bomberg is seen throughout his collection, with pieces by Auerbach and Kossoff, both his former students. However, unlike the Auerbach painting that fetched a record high price, Leon Kossoff's, *Marsyas (A Memory)* (Figure 41) did not even reach the low estimate. The abstract painting only sold for 31,250 GBP when it was expected to sell for at least 40,000 GBP.<sup>144</sup> Recent sales of Kossoff's similar works show the volatility of their market. In May of 2016, *Head of Heinz III* (figure 42) was bought in;<sup>145</sup> in 2008, the price realized for *Study for 'Cephalus and Aurora' by Poussin no. 3* sold for 96,500 GBP;<sup>146</sup> and *Fidelma No. 1* sold in 2003 sold for 31,200 GBP.<sup>147</sup> The inherent lack of popularity of Kossoff was signaled throughout the Bowie catalogues. The painting was featured in the day sale rather than the evening sale, which has its own reputation and the painting only received 1/3 of a page in the catalogue, sharing the space with two other paintings.<sup>148</sup> The question, would the painting have received the celebrity premium had Sotheby's displayed the painting differently or emphasized its importance to Bowie? Maybe. The case demonstrates the disadvantage the painting was subjected to compared to other works in the sale, its low value reflects the lack of marketing and presentation of the Kossoff piece. The painting demonstrates that

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<sup>144</sup> Lot Number 114 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog, Accessed June 2019. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2016/bowie-collector-part-ii-modern-contemporary-art-day-auction-116148.html>

<sup>145</sup> Lot Number 47 in: Deutscher and Hackett, *Important Australian and International Fine Art*, (Deutscher and Hackett: Melbourne, May 2016), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.deutscherandhackett.com/42-important-australian-international-fine-art>

<sup>146</sup> Lot Number 313 in: Christie's, *The Collection of R.B. Kitaj*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog, Accessed June 2019, [https://www.christies.com/the-collection-of-rb-21998.aspx?saletitle=#lot\\_5033616](https://www.christies.com/the-collection-of-rb-21998.aspx?saletitle=#lot_5033616)

<sup>147</sup> Lot Number 413 in: Sotheby's, *Contemporary Art*, (London: Sotheby's, October 2003) e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.413.html/2003/contemporary-art-103024>

<sup>148</sup> Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, London: Sotheby's, November 2016, 50

celebrity provenance is not a singular determinate to create a high value, but additional efforts are needed to increase price.

The range of styles in Bowie's collection is indicative of his personality as a collector. He did not want to limit himself to one particular genre, but collected a broad scope of paintings. Although his collected was heavily influenced by modern British painters, their scope of styles ranges from abstract, figural to landscape—encompassing a wide variety of styles. One in particular, the *Andalusian Homestead* by Sir William Nicholson, is a calming landscape scene. The painting is part of Nicholson's pictorial diary, which is a body of works that represent significant moments in his life. The *Andalusian Homestead* (Figure 45) is one of those moments, it was painted in 1935 after a stay in Malaga Spain. The painting is carefully constructed to invite the viewer in through the dreamlike depiction of the countryside. The painting was received on par with Nicholson's typical market, selling for 40,000 GBP at auction.<sup>149</sup> However, prior to the Bowie sale, the Nicholson paintings sold for 16,875 GBP (Sotheby's London, 2014, Figure 48)<sup>150</sup> and in 2015 for 25,000 GBP (including buyer's premium) (Christie's London, 2015, Figure 47).<sup>151</sup> Following the Bowie sale, a similar painting sold for 47,500 GBP (Sotheby's London, 2017, Figure 46), possibly suggesting a resurgence in the market. Although it is impossible to tell if the increased market price is related to Bowie's

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<sup>149</sup> Lot Number 180 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog, Accessed June 2019. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2016/bowie-collector-part-ii-modern-contemporary-art-day-auction-116148.html>

<sup>150</sup> Lot Number 75 in: Sotheby's, *Daughter of History: Mary Soames and the Legacy of Churchill*, (London: Sotheby's, December 2014), e-catalog, Accessed September 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2014/daughter-history-mary-soames-legacy-churchill-114316.html>

<sup>151</sup> Lot Number 216 in: Christie's, *British and Irish Day Sale* (London: Christie's, June 2015), e-catalog, accessed September 2019, [https://www.christies.com/salelanding/index.aspx?intsaleid=25117&sc\\_lang=en&saletitle=&pg=all&action=paging&sid=383e18b1-7edd-48c7-ad17-954093a4eef8](https://www.christies.com/salelanding/index.aspx?intsaleid=25117&sc_lang=en&saletitle=&pg=all&action=paging&sid=383e18b1-7edd-48c7-ad17-954093a4eef8)

interest in Nicholson by raising awareness and/or desire to the late artist from his auction.<sup>152</sup>

### *Case Study Analysis*

After discussing the objects performance within the individual auctions, it is important to expand upon those ideas in order to contextualize them within the broader scope of auctions and the effects of celebrity provenance. This section will be separated into two parts, the first will discuss the auction as a whole and how that affected art prices of some of the objects in question. It will be followed by a deeper analysis of individual object's performances in relation to the celebrity factor.

The two sales both demonstrate the importance of the location. Hosting the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sale in Paris was not only a request by Bergé, but also critical for the French market. As France is not typically a high-end auction market, the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sale posted a higher revenue total than both New York and London in the first quarter of the year in 2009. The French market only saw a 5% decrease, but it remained stable whereas New York and London were hit very hard by the financial crisis.<sup>153</sup> The total revenue from the sale was equivalent to 53.3% of the auction sales in 2008, illustrating the extreme success of auction. Within Paris, hosting the event at the luxury venue, the Grand Palais, also recounted the glitz and glamour auctions once possessed.

Aside from numbers, an emotional response also occurred by hosting the sale in Paris. By paying homage to their beloved city, the sale was even more well received, evident by the vast numbers of attendees at the auction and preview. There was no

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<sup>152</sup> In 2006, Bowie lent the painting to Paul Kasmin Gallery for a show on the British art, it was the first time in 80 years that the artist has been featured in America. Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, London: Sotheby's, November 2016, 50

<sup>153</sup> "Paris Resists Crisis," *Art Price*, Published July 13, 2019, Accessed June 2019, <https://www.artprice.com/artmarketinsight/paris-resists-crisis>

criticism about why the sale did not occur at a different major hub, such as London or New York; outside visitors happily flew to Paris for the event.<sup>154</sup> The city was not only used to celebrate Yves Saint Laurent, but was an imperative for the success of the sale as a whole. A majority of the objects in the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé collection were French—inspired by the French, created by French artists or artists who studied in France. The sale essentially celebrated French culture, placing the items into context among the city's national treasures. Although they collected outside their home country, the importance of the dominantly French collection being shown in Paris brings back a sense of nostalgia to when the city was the world leader for the art market. The nostalgic atmosphere may not directly increase the value, but it added a level of sophistication to the event, especially since it was at the Grand Palais.

Although London is still a top art market, its dominance has decreased within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, 44% of art sales occur in the United States, 21% occur in the UK and 19% in China.<sup>155</sup> The gap between the UK and China is closing and soon China will overtake as the second largest art market. Therefore, the David Bowie sale was extremely important for London—bringing back its once prominent reputation as a leader in the art market. The sale had 720 registered bidders for the first night who elevated the presale estimate of 11.7 million GBP to 24.3 million GBP.<sup>156</sup> The sale broke Sotheby's records of the number of registered bidders in a single night. Interestingly, of all the attendees, the *New York Times* states that the atmosphere in the sale was “curiously

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<sup>154</sup> Steven Erlanger, “Saint Laurent Art Sale Brings in \$264 Million”

<sup>155</sup> Clare McAndrew, “The Art Market 2019,” 22

<sup>156</sup> Colin Gleadell, “\$30 Million David Bowie Auction Sets Record for Modern British Art,” *Artnet News*, Published November 10, 2016, Accessed June 2019, <https://news.artnet.com/market/sothebys-modern-british-art-auction-record-744056>

low-key,” and that there was “not a celebrity or art-world personality in sight,” alluding to the high attendance of David Bowie fans.<sup>157</sup>

The hype associated with David Bowie has been emphasized even before his death; in 2013 the Victoria and Albert Museum opened the exhibition “David Bowie is,” which was seen by over 1.5 million people.<sup>158</sup> Similarly, the Bowie preview offered another opportunity for guests to learn about the artist. Over 55,000 attended the preview as it traveled from London, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dubai and Hong Kong.<sup>159</sup> Containing 350 artworks, ranging in style, period and artist—but the most prominent feature was Bowie’s love of Modern British painters which accounted for about 60% of the sale.<sup>160</sup> Similar to Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, the national pride of collecting from ones’ nation is emphasized by David Bowie. Bowie brought obscure artists to light—setting 34 records within the Modern British artist category alone, the total sale had 46 records set.<sup>161</sup> Not only did individual artists outperform expectations, but the sale as a whole generated 32.9 million GBP, the high estimate expectation was a mere 14,317,020 GBP in comparison.<sup>162</sup>

*Analysis of Auction Houses and their relationship to the “Celebrity Factor”*

Bowie’s passion for Modern British artists is impossible to ignore, specifically his love for David Bomberg. The auction featured 12 of his works; the star lot, *Sunrise in the Mountains, Picos de Asturias*, selling for 353,000 GBP, 100,000 GBP over the high-estimate.<sup>163</sup> It’s easy to assume that it reached the high value because it was Bowie’s

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<sup>157</sup> Roslyn Sulcas, “Bidding to Own a Piece of David Bowie,” *The New York Times*, Published November 11, 2016, Accessed June 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/13/fashion/david-bowie-sothebys-art-auction.html>

<sup>158</sup> “White Glove Sale of David Bowie’s Art Collection” *Sotheby’s*

<sup>159</sup> Roslyn Sulcas, “Bidding to Own a Piece of David Bowie”

<sup>160</sup> “White Glove Sale of David Bowie’s Art Collection” *Sotheby’s*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Lot number 17 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby’s, November 2016), e-catalog

favorite; the catalogues were filled with essays describing Bowie's love of Bomberg and every opportunity Sotheby's had to mention that Bomberg was a teacher to Auerbach and Kossoff (two other artists in the sale), they took it. Interestingly enough, another one of his paintings, *Plazuela De La Paz, Ronda* did not experience the same fortune. The painting sold under the high estimate at 68,750 GBP, which was previously established as low for the extremely volatile Bomberg market.<sup>164</sup> From this comparison, it is possible to both see *and* not see the celebrity factor at play. The question now is why is this occurring? To respond, it must be emphasized again that Bowie had 12 Bomberg's in his collection, consequently reducing the scarcity value. The problem with this response is that doesn't owning 12 pieces by the same artist really show that you love them? Well, yes and no. It illustrates that *Bowie* loved Bomberg, but looking the market prices of similar paintings depicts a different story. *The Moors Bridge, Ronda* sold for 85,000 GBP in 2018, only 5,000 GBP above the high estimate.<sup>165</sup> Another painting, *The Old City and Cathedral, Ronda* resulted in 149,000 GBP in 2016—falling within the estimates and occurring around the same time as the Bowie Sale.<sup>166</sup> This piece actually presents a unique point, a painting *without* Bowie's association sold for more money, why is that? The answer cannot be fully confirmed because we cannot interview the buyers, but it is safe to assume that whoever purchased the *The Old City and Cathedral, Ronda* was a real collector of Bomberg works, whereas purchasing in the Bowie sale was just for the provenance and a relatively 'affordable' nature when considering the auction as a whole. The point being is that even though there is not a premium reflected in the price, the

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<sup>164</sup> Lot number 40 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016) e-catalog

<sup>165</sup> Lot Number 164 in: Christie's, *Modern British Day Sale*, (London: Christie's, June 2018), e-catalog

<sup>166</sup> The estimates for the painting was 120,000-180,000 GBP. Lot Number 28 in: Christie's, *Modern British and Irish Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, November 2016)

association and the paintings very existence within David Bowie's collection still facilitated a sale.

The intense marketing for Bomberg by Sotheby's was probably not just because Bowie loved Bomberg, but actually a tactical approach on *how* to sell 12 works by the same artist in a singular collection. The more information put out about the artist and artworks, stressed the importance of Bomberg to Bowie, hoping to build up the celebrity factor using the psychological tactic of classical conditioning, a form of associative learning. This type of learning is when a "response already associated with one stimulus is associated with a second stimulus to which is had no previous connection."<sup>167</sup> In this case, the first stimulus is, David Bowie and the response is "love,"<sup>168</sup> which ultimately leads to pairing "love" with Bomberg through the constant association between the two. This idea explains why the artist did well and sold, but still does not answer the question of why one piece went above the high estimate and the other experienced the opposite. It all has to do with the numbers, since there were 12 paintings offered by Bomberg, there was no need for heightened competition to obtain any of the works. If the price got too high, the buyers still had other opportunities to purchase one of his paintings, therefore enabling more buyer satisfaction. The case illustrates that the celebrity factor may still be present, evident by the success of selling all 12 Bomberg paintings, but the premium is not often recognized.

A similar problem occurred in the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sale. In the case of the Fernand Léger, *Composistion Dans l'usine*, which for 5,553,000 EUR,

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<sup>167</sup> "Learned Behaviors," *Khan Academy*, Accessed November 2019, <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/biology/behavioral-biology/animal-behavior/a/learned-behaviors>

<sup>168</sup> Using "Love" to describe how Bowie felt about Bomberg, the constant association between the individual and the emotional response associated when Bomberg is brought up is how classical conditioning is working.

47,000 EUR below the low estimate.<sup>169</sup> Which does not reflect the market value.

However, the low value can be attributed to the presence of five other Léger paintings in the sale. Specifically, lots 38-40, which are all visually similar and were auctioned off back to back. By placing the similar objects in close proximity, the “celebrity factor” is diminished due to the increased chance buyers had to purchase the painting. The Léger painting emphasizes the celebrity provenances relationship to scarcity—the increased presence of Léger in the auction removed the appeal of uniqueness. All three of these paintings were displayed in Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé’s apartment and none received any ‘special’ praise or attention by the owners which grounds the works as being basically interchangeable, aside from personal aesthetic preferences. The lack of the celebrity factor for the Léger painting can be attributed to Christie’s catalogue placement. It is typical for auction houses to display works of art by the same artist in close proximity at auction, but in this case, this feature diminished the potential for a premium due to the celebrity provenance.

Catalogue placement is critical for the sale of art in general, where the item appears in the sale can influence the price, entire studies have been done on this feature. However, on a rudimentary level (as this is not a study on the psychology behind catalogue placement), an image with no context and shares a page with other works of art is often viewed as being less valuable. In the case of Leon Kossoff’s *Marsyas (A Memory), No. 2*, that is exactly what occurred. The painting received only 1/3 of a page in the catalogue, sharing the space with two other paintings.<sup>170</sup> However, if one knew anything about Kossoff, they would know that he was another one of Bowie’s

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<sup>169</sup> Lot Number 40 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>170</sup> Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, London: Sotheby’s, November 2016, 50



favorite artists.<sup>171</sup> Kossoff was one of Bomberg's student, which illustrates the artistic literacy possessed by Bowie and demonstrates again that every item in his collection is significant in some way. Not only was the painting subjected to sharing a page with two other works, but also was placed in the day sale. Although great art is sold at day sales, it is typically reserved for lower valued objects, giving the connotation that the work is of lesser quality. Even though the painting is included in the David Bowie sale, the lack of marketing and attention regarding the painting diminished any potential for the object to perform well. Illustrating that the auction houses are partially in control on which objects receive the celebrity premium.

However, sometimes the lack of a celebrity premium is not due to the auction houses marketing. The painting, *Andalusian Homestead* by Sir William Nicholson performed on par with its market. There is nothing significant mentioned about Bowie's relationship to the artist and the lot essay describes a cute story of how Nicholson sketched this image on the back of a postcard and gave it to a woman who would become his life companion.<sup>172</sup> With no viable information to describe the painting in context with Bowie, aside from the fact he loaned the painting in 2013 to Paul Kasmin for a retrospective in New York, Sotheby's did the next best thing. They associated the painting to a love story and talked about the sun-lit landscape, tying the importance to the artist rather than the celebrity. The painting sold for 40,000 GBP, exactly in the middle of the estimates.<sup>173</sup> However, similar to the Leon Kossoff painting, these paintings easily could have been overlooked in a general auction, but the heightened

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<sup>171</sup> In an interview with the New York Times, Bowie talks about who he collects, specifically including Leon Kossoff as someone he admires. Michael Kimmelman, "TALKING ART WITH/David Bowie; A Musician's Parallel Passion"

<sup>172</sup> Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, London: Sotheby's, November 2016, 126

<sup>173</sup> Lot Number 180 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog

awareness and exposure to new collectors through the general marketing of the celebrity sales resulted in the purchase of both items. Showcasing single-seller celebrity sales inherently create a 'premium,' whether the association results in a high value or simply just a sale.

Similar to treatment of *Andalusian Homestead* by Sir William Nicholson in the Bowie collection, the painting *Bord de Mer (Seaside)* by Edvard Munch experienced the same problem. The painting sold below estimate, with a price realized at 1,129,000 EUR compared to the low estimate of 1,200,000 EUR.<sup>174</sup> This is a surprising result, especially for a well-known artist coming from a well-known collection. The lot essay attempts to associate *Bord de Mar* and one of Munch's most celebrated series, the *Frieze of Life*. This strategic move, emphasizes the shared location between *Bord de Mar* to the series, where a majority of the works were painted in the same area. The forged association between the Yves Saint Laurent piece to the notable landscape of in the *Frieze of Life* series, illustrates the lack of information available to create the necessary desire for the celebrity factor. Whether it is the fact that Edvard Munch is not a French painter or the painting does not depict any association with fashion (through the presence of female figures or viable patterns for décor), there is little explanation demonstrating the significance of this painting to the owners, resulting in the lack of premium. Therefore, illustrating that the paintings inability to surpass the low estimate illustrates that quality is still the major factor in value, specifically when the collectors do not stand as an "authority" figure on the work of art.

The idea that great works, specifically by well-known, and established artists, will do well based on their own accord. However, this was not the case for Juan Gris' *Le Violon*. The painting sold for 3,873,000 EUR, and realized a price below the low

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<sup>174</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

estimate. Although the market is stable, neither *Guitarre* (figure 19)<sup>175</sup> or *Violon et Journal* (figure 20)<sup>176</sup> sold below the low estimate, both prices achieved fell within the estimates. However, the following year, the painting, *Violon et Guitarre* (Figure 18) sold at Christie's for 28,642,500 USD.<sup>177</sup> The similar characteristics, despite its larger size, shed light on the importance of quality over provenance, indicated by Juan Gris claiming the *Violon et Guitarre* was one of his favorite works.<sup>178</sup>

Another reason the painting lacks the celebrity premium can be attributed to its placement within the auction. Lots 23-26 were all placed next to one another, although they all embody different characteristics, neither of the oil paintings experience the celebrity factor. However, the sketches (lots 23 and 26) both exceed the high estimate, with Lot 26 realizing a price of 121,000 EUR<sup>179</sup>, compared to a 60,000 EUR high estimate, the celebrity factor comes into play.<sup>180</sup> This is important because it illustrates what Findlay said regarding modest and intermediate works more often experiencing the celebrity factor. This instance illustrates that there was interest in Juan Gris, just not enough to pay the asking price. Again, demonstrating the importance of *quality* over provenance when it comes to higher priced objects.

#### *Analysis of Object Performance and the "Celebrity Factor"*

In both auctions, certain objects significantly over performed in comparison to the market, the most obvious reason being the celebrity ownership. However, if that were

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<sup>175</sup> Lot number 45 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*. (New York: Sotheby's, November 2008), e-catalog

<sup>176</sup> Lot Number 43: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog

<sup>177</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2010), e-catalog, accessed June 2019, <https://www.christies.com/impressionist-and-modern-evening-22589.aspx?saletitle&saletitle=>

<sup>178</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2010), e-catalog

<sup>179</sup> Footnote

<sup>180</sup> Footnote the other Juan Gris that did well

the case, then why didn't every object outperform expectations. To answer this question, it is important to look at the specific characteristics and attributes possessed by the painting in order to understand why it was heavily influenced by the celebrity ownership. The record setting painting for the artist Meret Oppenheim, *La Condition Humaine*, reflects exactly how significant celebrity ownership can be. Estimated at 20,000-30,000 GBP, the painting resulting in an astounding 197,000 GBP.<sup>181</sup> There is little to say regarding Bowie's relationship with Oppenheim aside from his fascination with surrealist art—evident by the opening of his Isolar tour which featured images from Dalí and Buñuel's surrealist film, *The Andalusian Dog*.<sup>182</sup> Despite the lack of a concrete relationship between Bowie and Oppenheim, the lot essay offers great insight to why Bowie may have been interested in this painting. The intellectually stimulating piece confronts the viewer with an open void; what is within the void is unknown, but that is the beauty of life and freedom.<sup>183</sup> The perplexing, yet visually appealing painting forces us confront our inner desires and emotions, which is how Bowie has been known to describe his works—visually stimulating and intellectual, and this Oppenheim contains both qualities. However, this is all speculation on why the painting may have appealed to him. Without the concrete relationship, why did this piece experience a 556% price increase over the estimate? In this case it is simply the celebrity provenance, no association needed, that creates an appeal.

The simplicity of the response regarding the Oppenheim piece only occurs in a few rare instances. In conjunction with Michael Findlay theory that “modest or intermediate works” are more easily influenced by celebrity provenance appears to be

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<sup>181</sup> Lot number 36 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog

<sup>182</sup> Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, London: Sotheby's, November 2016, 10

<sup>183</sup> Lot number 36 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, London: Sotheby's, November 2016, 138

true in this case.<sup>184</sup> However, what this says about the collector is important to unpack. As previously discussed, there has been a change in the profile of art collectors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The collectors generally lack art market literacy and are not coming from art-collecting backgrounds.<sup>185</sup> In combination with these characteristics, new collectors have expressed increased interest in the “x-factor” of an object.<sup>186</sup> In the case of Meret Oppenheim’s painting, the buyer is mostly likely not a Meret Oppenheim collector, as a collector they would know that this piece is overpriced compared to the market and using other channels, they would find one at fair market value. Eliminating the possibility of a collector, points to a buyer who is fascinated with Bowie, using their *love* of the painting aesthetic to justify the high value paid.<sup>187</sup>

Unlike the Oppenheim piece, with no apparent relevance to Bowie, aside from his ownership, the *Head of Gerda Boehm* by Frank Auerbach experiences an opposite situation. The painting, sold for 3,798,000 GBP, reflecting a 659% increase above the high estimate.<sup>188</sup> The painting, is not only a stand-out among Auerbach’s oeuvre, but also is personally connected to David Bowie. In a 1998 interview in with Michael Kimmelman, Bowie describes his admiration of Auerbach and his emotional relationship with the painting.<sup>189</sup> Bowie’s experience with the painting illustrates the paintings importance to him, and also offers an inside look into his mind. The shared experience of looking at *The Head of Gerda Boehm* invokes a connection between the Bowie and the

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<sup>184</sup> Michael Findlay, *The Value of Art Money, Power, Beauty*, Munich: Prestel, 2014, 39

<sup>185</sup> Lori Holcomb-Holland, “Sotheby’s, Christie’s and Other Auction houses Adapt to Serve the Next Generation”

<sup>186</sup> Lori Holcomb-Holland, “In Bids, Celebrity Cachet Brings a Premium”

<sup>187</sup> Purchasing the painting for financial reasons is probably not likely when looking at the artists market, there is nothing suggesting the possibility of price inflation. Please refer to appendix C

<sup>188</sup> The paintings estimate was 300,000-500,000 GBP. Lot number 18 in: Sotheby’s, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby’s, November 2016), e-catalog

<sup>189</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “TALKING ART WITH/David Bowie; A Musician’s Parallel Passion,” The New York Times.

buyer, allowing the buyer to further identify with the deceased singer. The personalized connection provides the object with the “x-factor” needed to influence value.

No matter how appealing a personalized connection appears, it’s relevance will fade away overtime. What cannot fade away is inspiration, specifically referring to the iconic 1965 autumn-winter Christian Dior Winter collection designed by Yves Saint Laurent.<sup>190</sup> The designer modeled the dress after Piet Mondrian, an artist he greatly admired. Following his creation of the collection, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé sought out the specific painting and added it to their collection in 1978.<sup>191</sup> The painting, *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow and Black* sold for 21,569,000 EUR,<sup>192</sup> indicating through the high price that it was not just the paintings reverence as a ‘masterpiece’ but the associated history to Yves Saint Laurent cannot be separated from the importance of the painting. Although the Saint Laurent and Bergé piece is larger than the comparables, (Appendix A) the increased price is a factor of the enhanced history due to the association between the designer and the painting. The fascination enables the buyer to forever be connected to the history and legacy associated with both the Mondrian painting and YSL’s collection, elevating the intrinsic value of the painting. By “evoking the personal life of the celebrity...(and helping) the viewer comprehend their own lives,” the painting becomes a source of inspiration and a quasi-personal connection between themselves and past owner.<sup>193</sup> Serving as the inspiration for the 1965 collection solidified Yves Saint Laurent’s reputation as the “king of Paris,” and loudly expresses his “dialogue with art” that is seen throughout his designs.<sup>194</sup> The painting allows the buyer

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<sup>190</sup> “Homage to Piet Mondrian,” Museum of Yves Saint Laurent

<sup>191</sup> Lot Number 42 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>192</sup> Lot Number 42 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>193</sup> Lucy Trench, *The Victoria and Albert Museum*, London: V & A Publishing, 2010, 56

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

to be a part of the legacy; the legacy of Yves Saint Laurent as a designer, and the source of his design inspiration. The Mondrian painting illustrates how a direct association with an art object can increase value, in this case, Yves Saint Laurent's use of the painting as inspiration for a collection. When an object relates to one's passions, objects inherently are perceived more valuable due to the belief that physical objects contain embodied aspects of the celebrity.

Although the *Radio-Phonograph* was not used by Bowie in his actual career to make music, its associations with the musical world still harbor sentimental feelings toward the object, evident by its record-breaking price. The *Radio-Phonograph* sold for 257,000 GBP, compared to a high estimate of 1,200 GBP and a general market that rarely goes above 3,000 USD.<sup>195</sup> The question then begs, was it just Bowie's ownership that led to the exponential value increase or is there another factor at play? The catalogue attempts to associate the *Radio-Phonograph* with an acetate from the Velvet Underground given to Bowie when he first moved to New York.<sup>196</sup> The story continues saying Bowie was so inspired by the music that he made his band create a cover for one of the songs—the first cover ever done of a Velvet Underground song. Bowie's relation with the Velvet Underground does not stop there, in a vanity fair article in 2003, Bowie listed them as one of the best 25 albums.<sup>197</sup> The deeply inspired album and band serves as the root of Bowie's musical genius. The importance of the story is that the catalog claims "it is very likely that Bowie played that very acetate on his Brionvega *Radio-Phonograph*," meaning the buyer will possibly have access to an object that is directly tied back to Bowie's early musical career and also a band that is the source of

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<sup>195</sup> Lot Number 446 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part III: Design: Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog

<sup>196</sup> The Velvet Underground was Andy Warhol's band. Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part III: Design: Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group*, London: Sotheby's, November 2016, 81

<sup>197</sup> The Album was "The Velvet Underground and Nico, 1967." Ibid. 81

inspiration.<sup>198</sup> The highly speculative story enhances the value by grounding Bowie's foundation to the *Radio-Phonograph*. However, it is still important to keep in mind that Bowie acquired the *Radio-Phonograph* in 2014, and passed away on January 10, 2016, only giving maximum two years to use the object. However, those last two years were very busy, he was battling cancer, releasing his last album, *Blackstar*, and writing the music and lyrics for *Lazarus*, an off-Broadway play.<sup>199</sup> Knowing this, it is up to the buyer to decide what to believe.

Even disregarding the story about Bowie playing the acetate on the record player, the object still contains another unique aspect that can account for the celebrity factor. The fact the object sold well above the general market for Giacomo and Castiglioni works, illustrates that the purchase of the object was purely for the David Bowie provenance. Had a collector been deeply infatuated with this work, research shows their availability on the market at much cheaper prices. Therefore, indicating the ultimate goal was not to own a *Brionvega Radio-Phonograph*, but to specifically own, the David Bowie version. Due to the commercialized nature of the object, there is nothing that differentiates them from one another aside from the color, indicating that the celebrity provenance plays a major factor when selling objects that are *not* unique or one of a kind.

Together, all three factors attribute to the "celebrity factor" premium. The association of the object to Bowie's profession as a musician indicates his authority over objects within his professional realm, similar to the increased value of the Mondrian painting in Yves Saint Laurent's sale. Additionally, the story about whether Bowie used the *Brionvega Radio-Phonograph* to listen to the foundational album is still a compelling

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid. 81

<sup>199</sup> *The Last Five Years*. Documentary. Directed by Francis Whately. London: BBC, 2017.



story. It grounds his talents into the physical embodiment of an object. Lastly, the commercial quality of the object in regards that it is not unique is important because differentiate the commodity through the use of the “x-factor.”

Part of an edition of 7, the *Femme Accroupie*, is not one of a kind. The sculpture sold for 217,000 EUR, compared to a market that averages between 60,000-80,000 USD.<sup>200</sup> The *Femme Accroupie* sculpture from the Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé collection emphasizes the point that celebrity provenance has a greater influence over objects that are not ‘unique.’ To further prove this point, a 2015 sculpture from the same edition appeared on the market, only fetching 68,750 EUR.<sup>201</sup> The price difference between the exact same object underlines the importance of “story telling.” Since the object is not ‘one of a kind,’ provenance increases value by attributing an “x-factor” to the object, one of the current trends in art collecting in accordance with the new profile of collectors. It is worth noting that since the Henri Laurens market did not change following the YSL and Pierre Bergé suggests that the collector paid the premium only for the associated name, not for the objects’ aesthetic value. The information is supported by the sale of the David Bowie *Brionvega Radio-Phonograph*, which also experienced a huge price inflation over the typical market. Both objects use the celebrity provenance as a distinguishing feature and fall in line with desire for “story telling.”

The last object to be discussed in the Manet, *Jeune Fille en Chapeau d’été*. Although the price is not much over the high estimate, selling for 721,000 EUR, only 21,000 EUR above the high estimate.<sup>202</sup> The general market for Manet pastels does not

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<sup>200</sup> Lot Number 21 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog

<sup>201</sup> This is the hammer price, it does not include the buyer’s premium. Lot Number 14 in: Sotheby’s, *Impressionniste et Moderne*, (Paris: Sotheby’s, June 2015), e-catalog, accessed September 2019, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2015/art-impressionniste-moderne-pf1506.html>

<sup>202</sup> Lot Number 3 in: Christie’s, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie’s, February 2009), e-catalog

reach value so this magnitude. As discussed earlier, the volatility of the market prices suggest that this is not a heavily desired Manet. The more 'affordable' nature of the Manet pastel falls in line with Findlay's theory that moderate or intermediate works are more heavily influenced by notable provenance. It is important to note that there is little connection made between the pastel and YSL or Pierre Bergé. The catalog essay mentions basic facts about Manet's style and attempts to identify the girl, but it concludes that it is a "mystery."<sup>203</sup> With no definitive historical importance evident by lack photographs of the collectors interacting with the piece or mentioning of it, in addition to the volatile art lower valued market demonstrate that the buyer most likely purchased the pastel for simply for its notable provenance. The Manet pastel reflects the importance of the collectors' reputation, enabling a piece to far surpass its general market without any notable reason aside from the provenance.

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<sup>203</sup> Lot Number 3 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

## **Conclusion**

The two auctions, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé and the David Bowie collection, shed light on new findings that attribute to the growing fascination with celebrity provenance. Their use of the “celebrity factor” as a form of “storytelling” reframes provenance to conform with the contemporary age and makes it appear that the provenance is what is selling art. However, when looking specifically at the types of objects impacted, it is not everything in the entire sale, only certain characteristics of fine art and design are influenced by the presence of celebrity ownership. Ultimately indicating the reason for the success is not the celebrity provenance, but rather the auction houses capitalization and marketing of the celebrity name. The information the auction houses emphasize specifically highlight certain objects’ relationship to the celebrity, which gives rise to the belief that the celebrity provenance creates a premium at auction, but it is not the case. The increased attention by associating a sale to a celebrity creates an inviting atmosphere for new bidders and viewers to participate, and as a result lots are sold at higher values than expected. The reason for this comes in two parts. The first reason can be simplified down to celebrity fascination; and the other is that many new collectors lack art market literacy and do not understand the objects’ ‘value,’ and instead use celebrity ownership as justification for their outrageous bids.

Appendix A: Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé *Highs*

Figure 1



Édouard Manet, *Jeune Fille en Chapeau d'été*

Pastel on Canvas

Signed 'Manet'

22 by 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (56 by 35 cm)

Executed 1879

Lot 3: Christie's Paris: Collection Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé, February 2009

Estimate: 500,000-700,000 EUR

Price Realized: 721,000 EUR<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Lot Number 3 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog



Édouard Manet, *Jeune Femme Decolletée*

Pastel on Primed Canvas

22 by 18 3/8 in (56 by 46.5 cm)

Executed 1882

Lot 160: Sotheby's New York: Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale, November 2007

Estimate: 300,000-400,000 USD

Hammer Price: 337,000 USD<sup>205</sup>

**Figure 2**



Édouard Manet, *Portrait de Madame Michel Lévy*

Pastel on Canvas

Stamped *E.M.* towards lower left

25 1/2 by 21 in (64.6 by 53.3 cm)

Executed 1882

Lot 314: Sotheby's London: Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale, June 2008

Estimate: 200,000-300,000 USD

Bought In<sup>206</sup>

**Figure 3**

**Figure 4**



Édouard Manet, *Mme Jeanne Martin en Chapeau Capote*

Pastel on Canvas laid on board

22 1/2 by 18 1/8 in (57.1 cm by 46.4 cm)

Circa 1881

Lot 364: Christie's New York: Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale, November 2005

Estimate: 140,000-180,000 USD

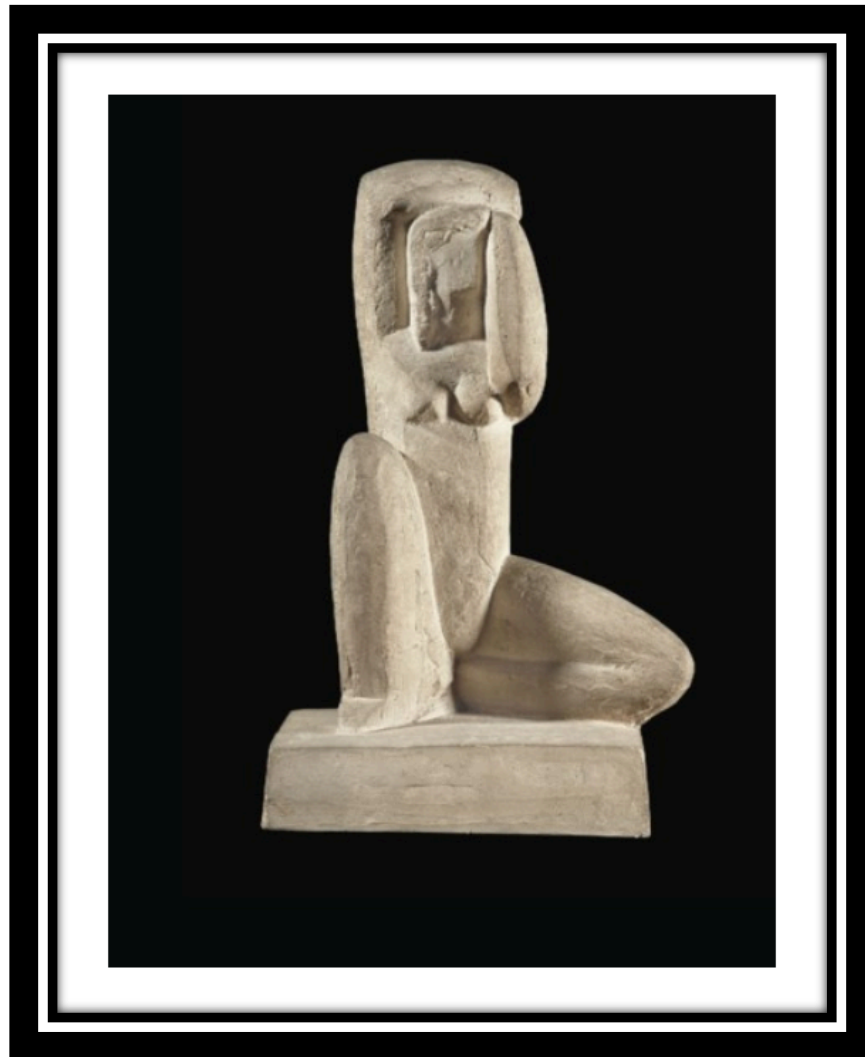
Price Realized: 296,000 USD<sup>207</sup>

<sup>205</sup> Lot Number 160 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (New York: Sotheby's, November 2007), e-catalog

<sup>206</sup> Lot Number 314 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (London: Sotheby's, June 2008), e-catalog

<sup>207</sup> Lot Number 364 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2005) e-catalog

Figure 5



Henri Laurens, *Femme Accroupie*  
Terracotta

Edition of 7 numbered 0-6, Numbered V (Inside Base)  
14 ¼ in (36.3 cm)  
Conceived in 1926

Lot 21: Christie's Paris: Collection Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé, February 2009  
Estimate: 40,000- 60,000 EUR  
Price Realized: 217,000 EUR<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Lot Number 21 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

**Figure 6**



Henri Laurens, *Femme Accroupie*  
Terracotta  
Inscribed with Artists' Monogram HL, Edition of 7 numbered  
0-6, Numbered 1 of 6 on Base  
14.6 in (37 cm)  
Executed in 1930  
Lot 136: Sotheby's London: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Day Sale, March 2018  
Estimate: 40,000-60,000 GBP  
Hammer Price: 50,000 GBP<sup>209</sup>

**Figure 7**



Henri Laurens, *Femme Accroupie*  
Terracotta  
Numbered IV  
12 ¼ in (36 cm)  
Executed 1926  
Lot 14: Sotheby's Paris: Impressionniste et Moderne, June  
2015  
Estimate: 60,000- 80,0000 EUR  
Hammer Price: 68,750 EUR<sup>210</sup>

**Figure 8**



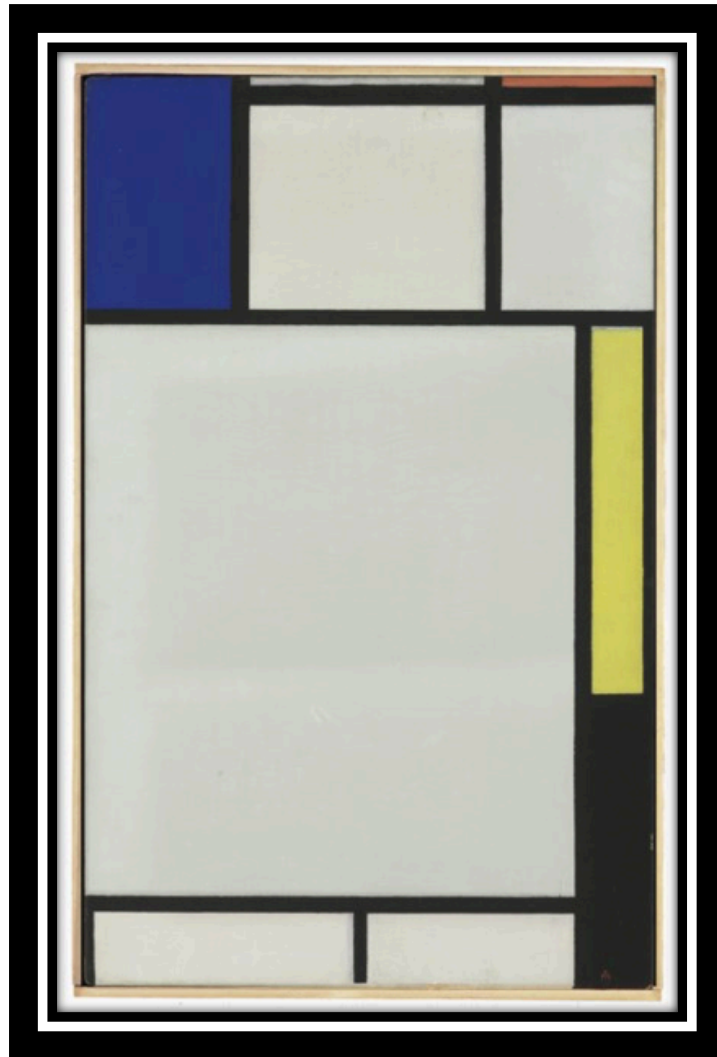
Henri Laurens, *Femme Accroupie*  
Terracotta  
Signed with monogram 'HL' (on top of the base)  
8 ¼ in (21 cm)  
Conceived 1928  
Lot 431: Christie's New York: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Day Sale, November 2005  
Estimate: 50,000-70,000 USD  
Price Realized: 45,600 USD<sup>211</sup>

<sup>209</sup> Lot Number 136 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (London: Sotheby's, March 2018), e-catalog

<sup>210</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionniste et Moderne*, (Paris: Sotheby's, June 2015), e-catalog

<sup>211</sup> Lot Number 431 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2005) e-catalog

Figure 9



Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow and Black*

Oil on Canvas, in Artists Frame

Signed with Monogram in lower Right

31  $\frac{7}{8}$  by 19  $\frac{1}{2}$  in (79.6 by 49.8 cm)

Painted 1922

Lot 42: Christie's Paris: Collection Yves Saint Laurent at Pierre Bergé, February 2009

Estimate: 7,000,000-10,000,000 EUR

Price Realized: 21,569,000 EUR<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Lot Number 42 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog, accessed June 2019

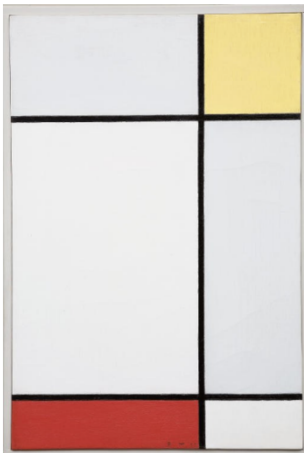


**Figure 10**



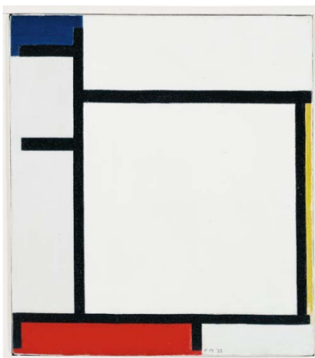
Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Red, Blue and Grey*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed P.M. and Dated 27 (lower left)  
26 by 19  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (66 by 50 cm)  
Painted 1927 (In original stretcher)  
Lot 14: Sotheby's London: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Evening Sale, June 2014  
Estimate: 13,000,000-18,000,000 GBP  
Hammer Price: 15,202,500 GBP<sup>213</sup>

**Figure 11**



Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Yellow and Red*  
Oil on Canvas  
Initialed and Dated 'PM 27' Lower center  
20  $\frac{1}{2}$  by 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  (52 by 35 cm)  
Painted 1927  
Lot 53: Christie's London: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Evening Sale, February 2008  
Estimate: 1,300,000-1,800,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 2,148,500 GBP<sup>214</sup>

**Figure 12**



Piet Mondrian, *Composition with Blue, Yellow and Grey*  
Oil on Canvas  
Initialed and dated 'PM '22'  
15  $\frac{1}{2}$  by 13  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (39.4 by 34.8 cm)  
Painted 1922  
Lot 23: Christie's London: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Evening Sale, June 2007  
Estimate: 1,600,000-2,400,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 2,932,000 GBP<sup>215</sup>

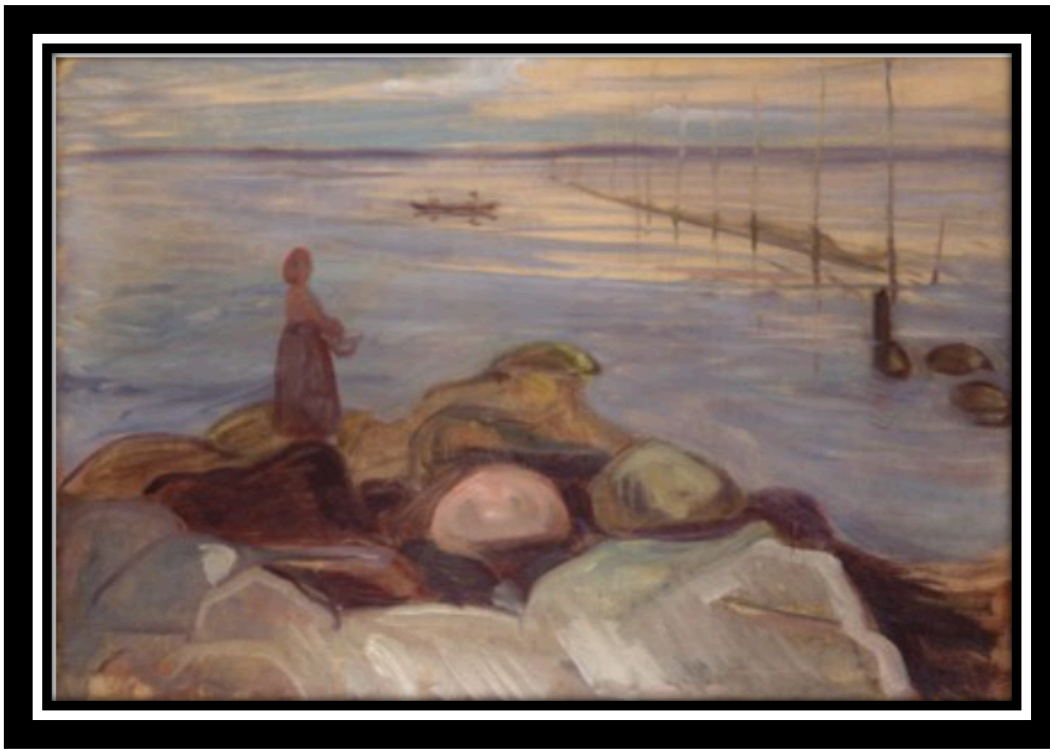
<sup>213</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Sotheby's June 2014) e-catalog

<sup>214</sup> Lot Number 53 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008) e-catalog, accessed June 2019

<sup>215</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, London: Christie's, June 2007, e-catalog, accessed June 2019

Appendix B: Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé *Lows*

Figure 13



Edvard Munch, *Bord de Mer (Seaside)*

Oil on Canvas

Signed and Dated 'E. Munch 98'

22 by 31  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (56 by 80.9 cm)

Painted 1898

Lot 14: Christie's Paris: Collection Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé, February 2009

Estimate: 1,200,000-1,800,000 EUR

Price Realized: 1,129,000 EUR<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

**Figure 14**



Edvard Munch, *Vampire*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed *E. Munch* and dated 1984 (Upper Right)  
39 3/8 by 43 3/8 in (100 by 110 cm)  
Painted 1894  
Lot 14: Sotheby's New York: Impressionist and Modern  
Art Evening Sale, November 2008  
Estimate: Upon Request  
Hammer Price: 38,162,500 USD<sup>217</sup>

**Figure 15**



Edvard Munch, *Badende*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed with the initials 'EM' (upper left)  
27 7/8 by 22 7/8 in (70.8 by 58.3 cm)  
Painted 1897-1899  
Lot 69: Christie's London, Impressionist and Modern Art  
Evening Sale, February 2008  
Estimate: 1,500,000-2,000,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 2,484,500 GBP<sup>218</sup>

**Figure 16**



Edvard Munch, *View from Nordstrand*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed *Munch* (lower right)  
31 5/8 by 25 5/8 in  
Painted 1900-01  
Lot 41: Sotheby's London, Impressionist and Modern art  
Evening Sale, February 2007  
Estimate: 1,000,000-1,500,000 GBP  
Hammer Price: 3,828,000 GBP<sup>219</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Lot Number 21 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Sotheby's, November 2008), e-catalog

<sup>218</sup> Lot number 69 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog

<sup>219</sup> Lot Number 41 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Sotheby's, February 2007), e-catalog

Figure 17



Juan Gris, *Le Violon*

Oil on Canvas

Signed and Dated 'Juan Gris 8-13' on reverse

23 by 28 ¼ in (58.4 by 71.7 cm)

Painted 1913

Lot 25: Christie's Paris: Collection Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé, February 2009

Estimate: 4,000,000-6,000,000 EUR

Price Realized: 3,873,000 EUR<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Lot Number 25 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog





**Figure 18**  
 Juan Gris, *Violon et Guitare*  
 Oil on Canvas  
 Signed, Inscribed and dated 'Juan Gris, Céret. 9-13' on reverse  
 39 ½ by 25 ¾ in (100.3 by 65.4 cm)  
 Painted in Céret, 1913  
 Lot 23: Christie's New York: Impressionist and Modern Evening Sale, November 2010  
 Estimate: 18,000,000-25,000,000 USD  
 Price Realized: 28,642,500 USD<sup>221</sup>



**Figure 19**  
 Juan Gris, *Guitare*  
 Oil on *papier collé* on canvas  
 Signed 'Juan Gris' and Dated 'Paris 12-13' on reverse  
 28 ¾ by 23 7/8 in (73 by 60.5 cm)  
 Painted in December 2013  
 Lot 45: Sotheby's New York: Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale, November 2008  
 Estimate: 6,000,000-8,000,000 USD  
 Hammer Price: 6,578,500 USD<sup>222</sup>



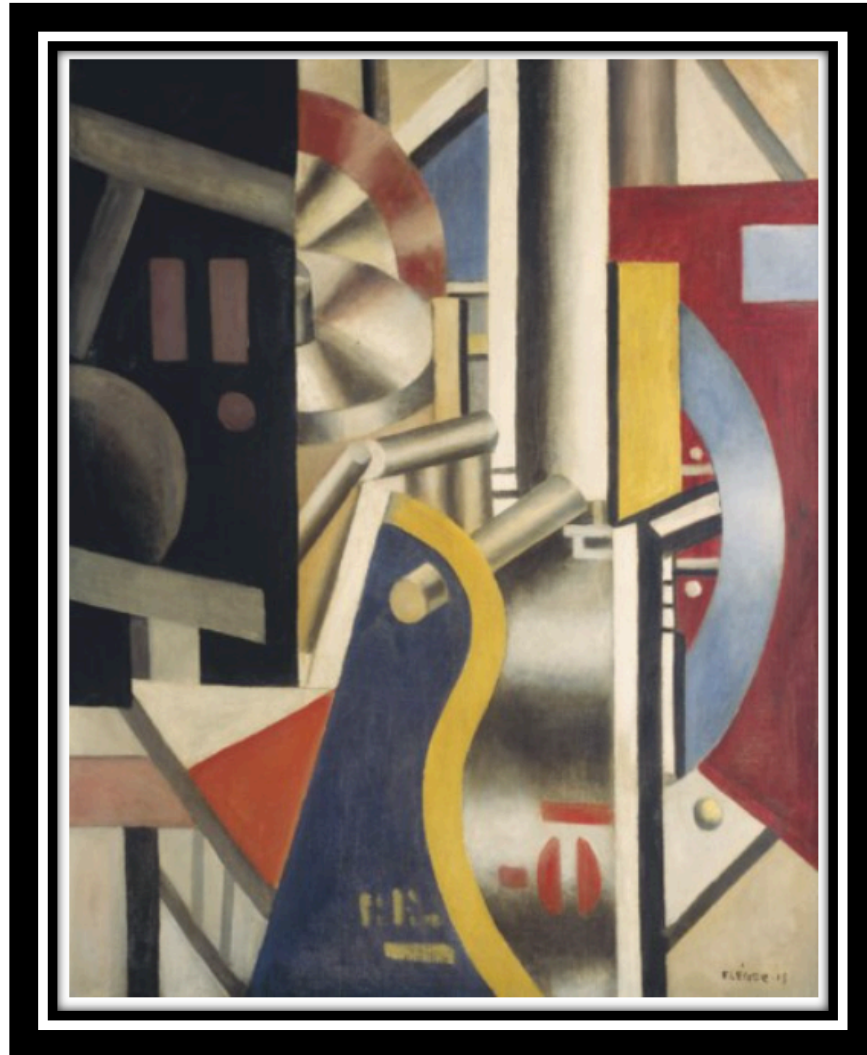
**Figure 20**  
 Juan Gris, *Violon et Journal*  
 Oil on Panel  
 Signed and Dated 'Juan Gris 11'17' Lower Left  
 36 3/8 by 23 ¾ in (92.3 by 60.3 cm)  
 Painted November 1917  
 Lot 43: Christie's London: Impressionist and Modern Art evening Sale, February 2008  
 Estimate: 3,500,000-4,500,000 GBP  
 Price Realized: 3,940,500 GBP<sup>223</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Lot Number 23 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2010), e-catalog

<sup>222</sup> Lot number 45 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*. (New York: Sotheby's, November 2008), e-catalog, accessed June 2019,

<sup>223</sup> Lot Number 43: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog

Figure 21



Fernand Léger, *Composition, Dans l'usine*  
Oil on Canvas

Signed and Dated 'F.Léger 18' (lower Right)  
39 3/8 by 31 7/8 in (100 by 81 cm)

Lot 40: Christie's Paris: Collection Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé, February 2009  
Estimate: 6,000,000-8,000,000 EUR  
Price Realized: 5,553, 000 EUR<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Lot Number 40 in: Christie's, *Yves Saint Laurent et Pierre Bergé*, (Paris: Christie's, February 2009), e-catalog

**Figure 22**



Fernand Léger, *Nature Morte aux Éléments Mécaniques*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed and Dated 'F.LÉGER 18' lower right  
27 5/8 by 19 3/4 in (70.1 by 50.2 cm)  
Painted in 1918  
Lot 18A: Christie's New York: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Evening Sale, May 2017  
Estimate: 10,000,000-15,000,000 USD  
Price Realized: 11,447,500 USD<sup>225</sup>

**Figure 23**



Fernand Léger, *Les Usines*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed *Léger* lower left, titled, signed and dated on reverse  
27 1/8 by 21 in (69 by 53.5 cm)  
Painted 1918  
Lot 30: Sotheby's New York: Impressionist and Modern Art  
Evening Sale, May 2007  
Estimate: 5,000,000- 7,000,000 USD  
Hammer Price: 14,320,000 USD<sup>226</sup>

**Figure 24**



Fernand Léger, *Le Moteur*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed and Dated 'F.Léger 18' Lower Right  
54 by 46 1/2 in (137 by 118 in)  
Painted 1918  
Lot 9: Christie's New York: The Collection of Rene Gaffee  
the Estate of MME Rene Gaffe, November 2001  
Estimate: 4,000,000-6,000,000 USD  
Price Realized: 16,726,000 USD<sup>227</sup>

<sup>225</sup> Lot Number 18A in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, May 2017), e-catalog

<sup>226</sup> Lot Number 30 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale*, (New York: Sotheby's, May 2007), e-catalog

<sup>227</sup> Lot Number 9 in: Christie's, *Impressionist and Modern Art, Including the Collection of René Gaffé Evening Sale*, (New York: Christie's, November 2001) e-catalog



Appendix C: David Bowie *Highs*

Figure 25



Frank Auerbach, *Head of Gerda Boehm*

Oil on Board

17 ½ by 14 ½ in; 44.5 by 37cm

Executed: 1965

Lot 18: Sotheby's London: Bowie / Collector: Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art  
Evening Auction, November 2016

Estimate: 300,000- 500,000 GBP

Sold: 3,789,000 GBP<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Lot number 18 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog





Frank Auerbach, *Head of Gerda Boehm* **Figure 26**  
 Oil on Paper on Board  
 Signed, Titled and Dated 1964-5 on reverse  
 Executed: 1964-65  
 31  $\frac{1}{3}$  by 23  $\frac{1}{4}$  in; 79.7 by 59.1 cm  
 Lot 18: Sotheby's London: Contemporary Art Evening  
 Sale, June 2017  
 Estimate: 500,000-700,000 GBP  
 Hammer Price: 992,750 GBP<sup>229</sup>

**Figure 27**



Frank Auerbach, *Head of Helen Gillespie IV*  
 Oil on Canvas  
 Executed 1965  
 24 by 24 in; 61 by 61 cm  
 Lot 15: Sotheby's London: Contemporary Art Evening  
 Auction, October 2010  
 Estimate: 700,000-£900,000 GBP  
 Hammer Price: 1,071,650 GBP<sup>230</sup>

**Figure 28**



Frank Auerbach, *Head of Helen Gillespie*  
 Oil on Board  
 Executed: 1963-64  
 30 by 24  $\frac{1}{2}$  in; 76.3 by 62.2 cm  
 Lot 54: Sotheby's London: Contemporary Art Evening  
 Sale, July 2008  
 Estimate: 500,000-700,000 GBP  
 Hammer Price: 1,945,250 GBP<sup>231</sup>

<sup>229</sup> Lot Number 14 in: Sotheby's, *Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's June 2017), e-catalog

<sup>230</sup> Lot Number 15 in: Sotheby's, *Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, October 2010), e-catalog

<sup>231</sup> Lot Number 54 in: Sotheby's, *Contemporary Art Evening Sale*, (London: Sotheby's, July 2008), e-catalog

Figure 29



Meret Oppenheim, *La Condition Humaine*

Oil on Canvas

signed *M.O.* and dated *V.73*: titled *La condition humaine* on the reverse

35 ½ by 39 3/8 in; 90 by 100 cm

Executed in 1973

Lot 36: Sotheby's London: Bowie / Collector: Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art

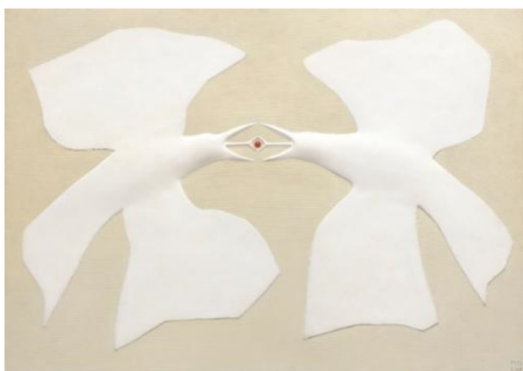
Evening Auction, November 2016

Estimate: 20,000-30,000 GBP

Hammer Price: 197,000 GBP<sup>232</sup>

<sup>232</sup> Lot number 36 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog

**Figure 30**



Meret Oppenheim, *Two Birds*,  
Oil and Egg on Tempera on Canvas  
Bottom Right monogrammed and dated  
35  $\frac{1}{3}$  by 49  $\frac{1}{6}$  in; 90 by 125cm;  
Painted 1963  
Lot: 99: Sotheby's Zurich: Schweizer Kunst/  
Swiss Art, December 2012  
Estimate: 80,000-120,000 CHF  
Hammer Price: 98,500 CHF<sup>233</sup>

**Figure 31**



Meret Oppenheim, *Large Cloudy Sky  
over the Continents*  
Oil on Canvas  
Initialed M.O. and dated X.64 lower right  
Painted 1964  
43  $\frac{1}{4}$  by 82  $\frac{5}{8}$  in; 110 by 210 cm  
Lot 110: Sotheby's New York:  
Impressionist and Modern Art including  
Russian Art, March 2010  
Estimate: 30,000-50,000 USD  
Hammer Price: 31,250 USD<sup>234</sup>

**Figure 32**



Meret Oppenheim, *Tout Toujours*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed and Inscribed  
1950-1950  
35  $\frac{1}{3}$  by 40  $\frac{3}{4}$  in; 90 by 104 cm  
Lot 96: Christie's Zurich: Schweizer Kunst,  
November 2002  
Estimate: 80,000-120,000 CHF  
Price Realized: 131,450 CHF<sup>235</sup>

<sup>233</sup> Lot Number 99 in: Sotheby's, *Schweizer Kunst/Swiss Art*, (Zurich: Sotheby's, December 2012), e-catalog

<sup>234</sup> Lot Number 110 in: Sotheby's, *Impressionist and Modern Art Including Russian Art* (New York: Sotheby's, March 2010), e-catalog

<sup>235</sup> Lot Number 96 in: Christie's, *Schweizer Kunst*, (Zurich: Christie's, November 2002), e-catalog

Figure 33



Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni *Radio-Phonograph, Model No. RR126*  
Designed 1966

Manufactured by Brionvega Milan, Italy  
plastic-laminated wood, painting aluminum, polycarbonate on castors; stamped  
*BRIONVEGA/RADIO TELEVISIONE MILANO/rr-126-fo-st./MODELLO DEPOSITATO*  
*MADE I ITALY, 1966*

24  $\frac{3}{4}$  by 49  $\frac{1}{4}$  by 14  $\frac{1}{8}$  in; 66 by 125 by 36 cm

This example was acquired in 2014.

Lot 446: Sotheby's London: *Bowie / Collector Part III: Design: Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group*, November 2016)

Estimate: 800-1,200 GBP

Hammer Price: 257,000 GBP<sup>236</sup>

<sup>236</sup> Lot Number 446 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part III: Design: Ettore Sottsass and the Memphis Group*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog





**Figure 34**

Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni, *RR126 Radio Phonograph*  
 Lacquered wood and molten aluminum  
 Brionvega Production, Italy, 1960  
 126 by 36 by 75 cm  
 Lot 165: Cambi Casa d'Aste: Design 200, September 2018).  
 Estimate: 1,500-2,000 EUR  
 Sold For: 1,800 EUR<sup>237</sup>



**Figure 35**

Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni, *un radiofonografo 'rr126'*  
 Cast aluminum, lacquered wood with dual turntable  
 Brionvega Production, Italy, 1965  
 24.6 by 49.2 by 14.2 inches  
 Lot 1015: Aste Boetto: Selected Design, Selected Lighting, Murano Design, April 2018.  
 Estimate: 1,600-1,800 EUR  
 Bought in<sup>238</sup>



**Figure 36**

Pier Giacomo and Achille Castiglioni, *Brionvega RR126 Radio*  
 Lacquered wood, enameled aluminum, aluminum, glass  
 24 ¼ by 15 by 26 inches (62 by 38 by 91 cm)  
 Brionvega Production, Milan Italy, 1965  
 Lot 316: Wright: Design, October 2016).  
 Estimate: 2,000-3,000 USD  
 Result: 3,250 USD<sup>239</sup>

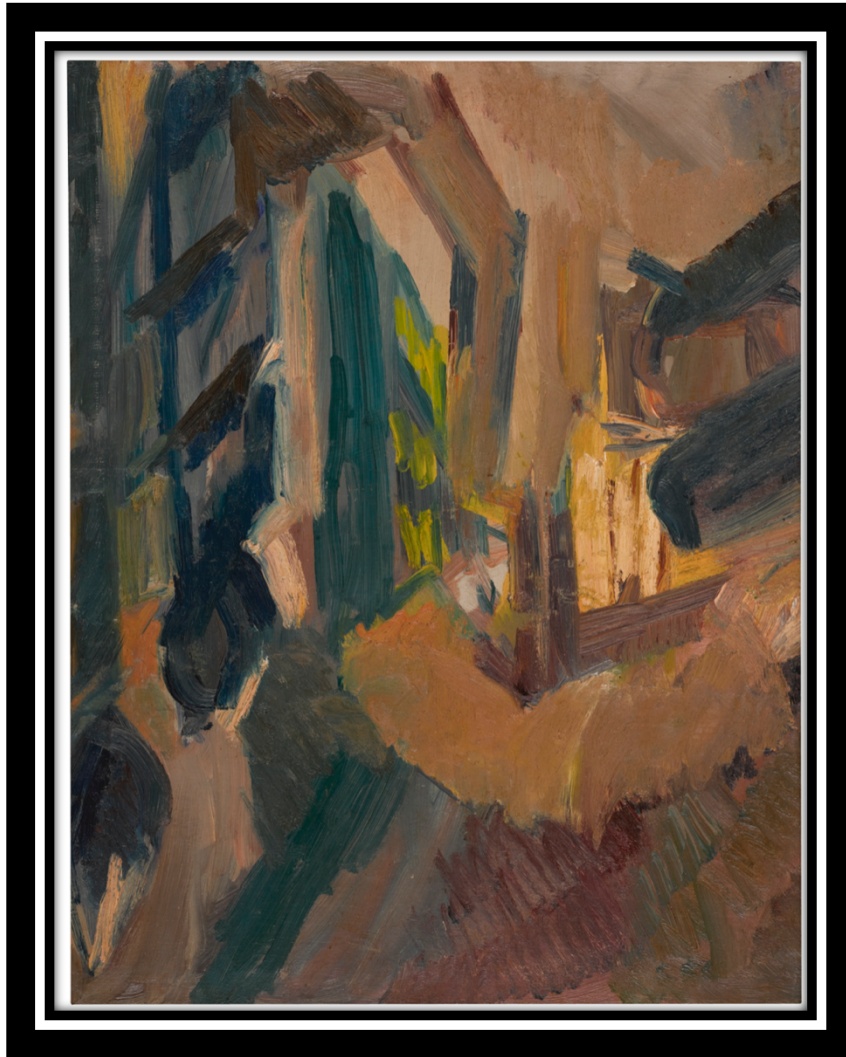
<sup>237</sup> Lot Number 165 in: Cambi Casa d'Aste, *Design 200*, (Milan: Cambi, September 2018), e-catalog

<sup>238</sup> Lot Number 1015 in: Aste Boetto, *Selected Design, Selected Lighting, Murano Design*, (Milan: Aste Boetto, April 2018), e-catalog

<sup>239</sup> Lot Number 316 in: Wright, *Design*, (Chicago: Wright, October 2016), e-catalog

Appendix D: David Bowie *Lows*

Figure 37



David Bomberg, *Plazuela De La Paz, Ronda*  
Oil on Board

32 by 25 inches (81 by 63.5 cm)

Executed 1935

Lot 40: Sotheby's London: Bowie / Collector Part 1: Modern and Contemporary Art  
Evening Auction, November 2016

Estimate: 100,000-150,000 GBP

Hammer Price: 68,750 GBP<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Lot number 40 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part I: Modern and Contemporary Art Evening Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016) e-catalog



**Figure 38**

David Bomberg, *The Moor's Bridge, Ronda*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed and Dated 'Bomberg 35' (lower right),  
20 by 26 inches (50.4 by 66cm)  
Lot 164: Christie's London: Modern British  
Day Sale, June 2018  
Estimate: 60,000-80,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 85,000 GBP<sup>241</sup>



**Figure 39**

David Bomberg, *The Old City and Cathedral, Ronda*  
Oil on Panel  
Signed and Dated 'Bomberg 35' (lower right)  
20 by 24 inches (50.8 by 61 cm)  
Lot 40: Christie's London: Modern British  
and Irish Evening Sale, November 2016  
Estimate: 120,000-180,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 149,000 GBP<sup>242</sup>



**Figure 40**

David Bomberg, *The Slopes of Navao, Picos de Europa*  
Oil on Canvas  
Signed and Dated 'Bomberg 35' (lower left)  
33 ¾ by 41 ¼ inches (85.7 by 104.7cm)  
Lot 40: Christie's London: Modern British  
and Irish Art Evening Sale, June 2014  
Estimate: 200,000-300,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 146,500 GBP<sup>243</sup>

<sup>241</sup> Lot Number 164 in: Christie's, *Modern British Day Sale*, (London: Christie's, June 2018), e-catalog

<sup>242</sup> Lot Number 28 in: Christie's, *Modern British and Irish Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's, November 2016)

<sup>243</sup> Lot Number 40 in: Christie's, *Modern British and Irish Art Evening Sale*, (London: Christie's June 2014), e-catalog



Figure 41



Leon Kossoff, *Marsyas (A Memory) No. 2*  
Oil on Board

20 by 18 inches (51.5 by 46 cm)

Lot 114: Sotheby's London: Bowie / Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day  
Auction, November 2016

Estimate: 40,000-60,000 GBP

Hammer Price: 31,250 GBP<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Lot Number 114 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog





**Figure 42**

Leon Kossoff, *Head of Heinz III*  
Oil on Board  
Inscribed on Verso: LK0030  
63.5 by 51 cm  
Painted 1998  
Lot 47: Deutscher and Hackett, Melbourne:  
Important Australian and International Fine Art, May  
2016  
Estimate: 160,000-200,000 AUD  
Bought in<sup>245</sup>

**Figure 43**



Leon Kossoff, *Study for 'Cephalus and Aurora' by Poussin no.3*  
Oil on Board  
25 ¼ by 29 1/8 in (64.2 by 74 cm)  
Painted 1977  
Lot 313: Christie's London: The Collection of R.B.  
Kitaj, February 2008  
Estimate: 80,000-120,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 96,500 GBP<sup>246</sup>

**Figure 44**



Leon Kossoff, *Fidelma No. 1*  
Oil on Board  
19 ½ by 24 in. (49.5 by 61 cm)  
Executed 1984  
Lot 413: Sotheby's London: Contemporary Art,  
October 2003  
Estimate: 25,000- 35,000 GBP  
Hammer Price: 31,200 GBP<sup>247</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Lot Number 47 in: Deutscher and Hackett, *Important Australian and International Fine Art*, (Deutscher and Hackett: Melbourne, May 2016), e-catalog

<sup>246</sup> Lot Number 313 in: Christie's, *The Collection of R.B. Kitaj*, (London: Christie's, February 2008), e-catalog

<sup>247</sup> Lot Number 413 in: Sotheby's, *Contemporary Art*, (London: Sotheby's, October 2003) e-catalog

Figure 45



Sir William Nicholson, *Andalusian Homestead*  
Oil on Board

Signed with Artist's monogram on the reverse  
13 by 16 in (33 by 40.5 cm)

Executed in 1935; Reworked by the artist *circa* 1943

Lot 180: Sotheby's London: Bowie / Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day  
Auction, November 2016

Estimate: 30,000-50,000 GBP

Hammer Price: 40,000 GBP<sup>248</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Lot Number 180 in: Sotheby's, *Bowie/Collector Part II: Modern and Contemporary Art Day Auction*, (London: Sotheby's, November 2016), e-catalog

**Figure 46**



Sir William Nicholson, *Mereworth Castle, Kent*  
Oil on Canvas Board  
Signed with Initials  
13 by 16 in (33 by 41 cm)  
Executed circa 1934  
Lot: 149: Sotheby's London: Modern and Post-War British Art, June 2017  
Estimate: 20,000-30,000 GBP  
Hammer Price: 47,500 GBP<sup>249</sup>

**Figure 47**



Sir William Nicholson, *Moorland Pool*  
Oil on Canvas-Board  
12 ¾ by 16 in (32.4 by 40.6 cm)  
Painted Circa 1933  
Lot 216: Christie's London: Modern British and Irish Day Sale, June 2015  
Estimate: 15,000-25,000 GBP  
Price Realized: 25,000 GBP<sup>250</sup>

**Figure 48**



Sir William Nicholson, *The Castle, Malaga*  
Oil on Canvas-board  
Signed and Inscribed  
13 by 16 in (33 by 41 cm)  
Painted 1935  
Lot 75: Sotheby's London: Daughter of History: Mary Soames and the Legacy of Churchill, December 2014  
Estimate: 40,000-60,000 GBP  
Hammer Price: 16,875 GBP<sup>251</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Lot Number 149 in: Sotheby's, *Modern and Post-War British Art*, (London: Sotheby's June 2017), e-catalog

<sup>250</sup> Lot Number 216 in: Christie's, *British and Irish Day Sale* (London: Christie's, June 2015), e-catalog

<sup>251</sup> Lot Number 75 in: Sotheby's, *Daughter of History: Mary Soames and the Legacy of Churchill*, (London: Sotheby's, December 2014), e-catalog



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